

Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventy-third  
Semiannual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**October 4 and 5, 2003**



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# Report of the 173rd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 173rd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 4, 2003, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 4 and 5, 2003. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 4, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the general priesthood session. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the Saturday morning and afternoon sessions. President James E. Faust conducted the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, video recordings of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and were made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live worldwide over the Internet.

## General Authorities

*First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

*Presidency of the Seventy:* Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, David E. Sorensen, Dennis B. Neuenschwander,

Charles Didier, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and Merrill J. Bateman

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Monte J. Brough, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Christoffel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Glenn L. Pace, Bruce D. Porter, Carl B. Pratt, Ronald A. Rasband, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Steven E. Snow, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Mervyn B. Arnold, E. Ray Bateman, Douglas L. Callister, Craig C. Christensen, Shirley D. Christensen, Val R. Christensen, Darwin B. Christenson, Keith Crockett, Adhemar Damiani, James M. Dunn, Daryl H. Garn, D. Rex Gerratt, H. Aldridge Gillespie, Ronald T. Halverson, Keith K. Hilbig, Spencer V. Jones, Gerald N. Lund, Clate W. Mask Jr., Dale E. Miller, Merrill C. Oaks, Robert C. Oaks, Robert F. Orton, Stephen B. Oveson, William W. Parmley, Wayne S. Peterson, H. Bryan Richards, Ned B. Roueché, R. Conrad Schultz, W. Douglas Shumway, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, Robert R. Steuer, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, William R. Walker, Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A. West, Robert J. Whetten, Richard H. Winkel, Robert S. Wood, and H. Ross Workman

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 173rd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 4, 2003, at 10:00 A.M. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Richard Elliott and John Longhurst were the organists. To begin this session, the choir sang “Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise.” President Monson then made the following remarks.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 173rd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand in the Conference Center and at the overflow locations in the Tabernacle and the Assembly Hall. We likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies in attendance at this conference.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and satellite and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world. We are also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Church Web site.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Richard Elliott and John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing “Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise” and will now favor us with “I Know That My Redeemer Lives.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder F. Melvin Hammond of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “I Know That My Redeemer Lives.”

Elder F. Melvin Hammond offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

Thank you, Elder Hammond. It will now be our pleasure to hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### **The growth and impact of this work**

My beloved brethren and sisters throughout the world, we send greetings in the name of our Redeemer. We send our love and our blessing. I commend you most warmly on what you are doing to move forward the work of the Lord.

Now and again I quietly reflect on the growth and impact of this work. I reflect on that meeting with a few present in the Peter Whitmer farmhouse on the 6th of April 1830. Here the Church was organized, and here began the long march which has brought it to its present stature.

Our people have passed through oppression and persecution; they have suffered drivings and every imaginable evil. And out of all of that has come something which today is glorious to behold.

### **Responsibility to preach the gospel**

In the opening of this work the Lord declared:

“Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the voice of him who dwells on high, and whose eyes are upon all men; yea, verily I say: Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together.

“For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated. . . .

“And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days.

“And they shall go forth and none shall stay them, for I the Lord have commanded them” (D&C 1:1–2, 4–5).

There can be no doubt concerning our responsibility to the peoples of the earth. There can be no doubt that we are moving forward in pursuing that responsibility.

### **A strong worldwide church**

As I speak to you today, most members of the Church, regardless of where you live, can hear me. It is a miracle. Who in the earlier days could have dreamed of this season of opportunity in which we live?

We now have strong congregations in every state of the United States and in every province of Canada. We have such in every state of Mexico, in every nation of Central America, and throughout the nations of South America. We have strong congregations in Australia and New Zealand and the isles of the Pacific. We are

well established in the nations of the Orient. We are in every nation of Western Europe and in much of Eastern Europe, and we are firmly established in Africa.

### **Tremendous missionary program**

We are being recognized for the tremendous virtues of our programs and the vast good which they do. A California newspaper recently commented:

“The white shirts, backpacks and bicycles give them away, even before you spot the Book of Mormon.

“They’re stereotyped, for good reason.

“These armies of young men—missionaries in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—are strictly regimented while serving missions around the globe.

“For two years, they spend 60 hours a week doing ecclesiastical work, praying, studying, and telling others about the Gospel that drove them to leave families, friends and the comfort of home behind.

“Contact with their loved ones is limited to letters and two calls a year.

“They live frugally, in private homes and apartments with companion missionaries, rising at 6 a.m. to study and pray for guidance in the work they will do until long after the sun sets. . . .

“This life, they say, is a sacrifice—and the most ‘fun’ they can imagine” (Pricilla Nordyke Roden, “Answering the Call,” *San Bernardino County Sun*, 26 Aug. 2003, p. B1).

That might have been written of our missionaries in the more than 120 nations in which they are found serving.

What a miracle it is that we should have some 60,000 of them, most of them young, giving of their time and their testimonies to the world.

I recently met with a group of missionaries who were to be released the next day to return home. They were from various nations across the earth, from Mongolia to Madagascar. They were clean and bright

and enthusiastic. They bespoke love for the Church, for their mission president, for their companions. What a marvelous thing is this unique and tremendous program of the Church.

Likewise other programs.

### **Wonderful humanitarian programs**

We recently were applauded in the public press for giving three million dollars to vaccinate children against measles in Africa. This money did not come from tithing. It came from contributions of the faithful to the humanitarian work of the Church. We have joined the American Red Cross, the United Nations Foundation, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization, and the Pan American Health Organization in an effort to immunize 200 million children and prevent 1.2 million deaths from measles over the next five years. Our contribution alone will provide vaccine for three million children.

What a marvelous and wonderful thing that is. And so it is with each of our humanitarian programs.

### **Perpetual Education Fund report**

One more item.

In March 2001 we announced that the Church was establishing a plan to assist our returned missionaries and other young adults in gaining education and training leading to better employment opportunities in countries with less abundance and fewer opportunities.

We invited those who wished to help in this plan to contribute to a fund called the Perpetual Education Fund, patterned after the 19th-century Perpetual Emigration Fund. I offer a brief report on what is happening with that plan.

Because of your generous contributions, we have been able to keep current

with the growing need for loans. To date the Church has granted about 10,000 loans to young men and women in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and other areas of the Church. These young people have committed to repay their loans so that others may enjoy the same opportunities they are experiencing.

Many have graduated and are experiencing the benefits of their training. To date, about 600 young men and women have completed their training. The majority of these have found good employment. Many more will graduate and enter the workforce in their own communities in the months ahead. They will make their mark in the world, rear families, and serve the Church. Many are already achieving these objectives.

For example, Patrick was the first Perpetual Education Fund student to complete school in Jamaica. His basic training in management earned him a well-paying job at the national airport, with a promising future. Repayment of his loan began immediately.

Flavia, a sister from a poorer part of South America, found little opportunity and means for training and regular employment until help came through the PEF to receive training in operating computers. With the help of LDS Employment Services, she found work in a good company after completing her training. She reports: "Today I am responsible for the financial consulting area of one of the largest hospitals in Recife using [a sophisticated] computer system. I was among the crew that implemented this financial system in the company."

These examples could be multiplied. We are happy to report that the plan is working well and gradually expanding as we gain experience. Early reports of loan repayments are encouraging. Again, we thank you for your generosity, interest, and prayers in behalf of the Perpetual Education Fund.



### **The sun never sets on the Lord's work**

It was said that at one time the sun never set on the British Empire. That empire has now been diminished. But it is true that the sun never sets on this work of the Lord as it is touching the lives of people across the earth.

And this is only the beginning. We have scarcely scratched the surface. We are engaged in a work for the souls of men and women everywhere. Our work knows no boundaries. Under the providence of the Lord it will continue. Those nations now closed to us will someday be open. That is my faith. That is my belief. That is my testimony.

The little stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands is rolling forth to fill the earth (see Daniel 2:31–45; D&C 65:2).

To the Latter-day Saints everywhere, as we gather in this great conference, I say, may God bless you. Keep the faith; be true to your covenants. Walk in the light of the gospel. Build the kingdom of God in the earth.

The Church is in wonderful condition and can and will improve. It will grow and strengthen.

### **Ordinary people, an extraordinary work**

We are ordinary people who are engaged in an extraordinary undertaking. We are men who hold the priesthood of the living God. Those who have gone before have accomplished wonders. It is our opportunity and our challenge to continue in this great undertaking, the future of which we can scarcely imagine.

Thank you, my brothers and sisters, for your faith and faithfulness. Thank you for the love you carry for this, the work of the Almighty. We live in the world. We work in the world. But we must rise above the world as we pursue the work of the Lord and seek to build His kingdom in the

earth. Let us now join together in a great world conference of men and women who are indeed brothers and sisters as children of God.

During the next two days we shall hear from many of our number, not one of whom has been told what to speak about, but each one of whom has pleaded with the Lord to be able to say something that will help, inspire, and lift all who hear.

May the blessings of heaven attend you. May you be faithful and true to the great and glorious cause which you have embraced is my humble prayer, in the name of our Redeemer, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### **Greeting from Elder Haight**

Now we have a special treat. I would like to ask Brother David B. Haight to come to the pulpit. Here is a grand old warrior. He is 97 years of age. He has lived longer than any other Apostle in the history of this dispensation. He recently became ill and has had a little difficulty. But he wanted to come this morning and just wave to you with a feeling of gratitude and appreciation for you and the great love which he feels for you. And to him, dear friend, we say, God bless you and heal you. We love you; we sustain you; we pray for you. May heaven's blessings rest upon you, dear Brother Haight. Thank you.

Elder Haight: Thank you.

President Hinckley: Do you want to wave to these people?

Elder Haight: Yes, I must. I am waving. Thank you, thank you. Nice to be with you.

President Hinckley: Thank you.

Elder Haight: Thank you.

President Hinckley: We will excuse him now. He will be watching on television. What a great soldier he has been in the army of the Lord. Thank you so much, Brother Haight.

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The choir sang “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

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### President Monson

Thank you, President Hinckley, for your inspiring remarks. Thank you, El-

der David B. Haight, for that sweet and sincere greeting. The whole church loves you.

The choir has sung “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” We will now be pleased to hear from Elders Sheldon F. Child and Lynn A. Mickelsen of the Seventy.

## Elder Sheldon F. Child

### Build testimonies on a sure foundation

Several years ago a severe storm hit the area in which we were living. It began with a torrential downpour, followed by a devastating easterly wind. When the storm was over, damages were assessed. Power lines were down, property had been damaged, and many of the beautiful trees that grew in the area had been uprooted. A few days later I was talking to a friend who had lost several trees in his yard. The trees on one side of his home were standing straight and tall. They had weathered the storm well, while the trees that were in what I considered the prime spot on his property had not been able to withstand the heavy winds. He pointed out that the trees that survived the storm were planted on firm ground; their roots had to sink deep into the soil to receive nourishment. The trees he had lost were planted near a small stream, where nourishment was readily available. The roots were shallow. They were not anchored deeply enough to protect them from the storm.

Our testimonies, like those trees, must be built on a sure foundation and deeply rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ, so that when the winds and rains come into our lives, as they surely will, we will be strong enough to weather the storms that rage about us. Helaman counseled his sons:

“And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Re-

deemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.”<sup>1</sup>

In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Jacob, in his encounter with Sherem the anti-Christ, asked this question:

“Deniest thou the Christ who shall come? And he said: If there should be a Christ, I would not deny him; but I know that there is no Christ, neither has been, nor ever will be.

“And I said unto him: Believest thou the scriptures? And he said, Yea.

“And I said unto him: Then ye do not understand them; for they truly testify of Christ. Behold, I say unto you that none of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ.

“And this is not all . . . ; it also has been made manifest unto me by the power of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>2</sup>

### Sources of truth for building testimony

Jacob points out three sources of truth—the scriptures, the prophets, and the Holy Ghost—that testify of Christ.

They will help us build “upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God.”<sup>3</sup>

### *The scriptures*

The Savior Himself said, “Search the scriptures; . . . they are they which testify of me.”<sup>4</sup> When the Lord directed Lehi to take his family and flee into the wilderness, He knew they would need a strong foundation upon which to build in the new land. So important were the scriptures that in order to obtain the records, the voice of the Spirit directed Nephi to slay Laban, saying, “It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief.”<sup>5</sup>

About this same time in history, the Lord led another group of people out of Jerusalem to the promised land. Many generations later, King Mosiah discovered their descendants. They were known as the people of Zarahemla. Their spiritual condition was poor. In Omni we read, “Their language had become corrupted; and they had brought no records with them; and they denied the being of their Creator.”<sup>6</sup> Without scriptures, not only nations perish, but families and individuals dwindle in unbelief. Daily scripture study helps us anchor our faith in Christ. The scriptures truly testify of Him.

### *The prophets*

Several years ago I was assigned to reorganize a stake presidency. At the Sunday session of the conference, the wife of the newly called stake president related this story. She stated that she had been raised in a good Christian home. Her parents gathered their family together every day to read and study the Bible. As they read about the prophets of old, she asked her parents why there were no prophets on the earth today. They didn’t have an answer that satisfied her, nor did her teachers or her religious leaders.

One day, as a university student, she noticed two young men wearing white shirts and ties. She could read the name “Jesus Christ” on the black name tags they wore. She spoke to them and asked if they were ministers. “Yes, we are! We are missionaries for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

“Then may I ask you a question?” she said. “Does the Lord love the people today as much as He loved the people of olden times?”

“Yes, He does!” was their reply.

“Then why do we not have prophets on the earth today?”

Can you imagine the excitement of two young missionaries being asked a question like that? They said, “We do. We do have prophets on the earth today. Can we tell you about them?”

Our message to the world is the same: We do have prophets on the earth today. This very afternoon we will raise our hands to sustain President Gordon B. Hinckley, his counselors, and the Quorum of the Twelve as prophets, seers, and revelators. They are special witnesses of the name of Jesus Christ. In the document “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” they state:

“We bear testimony, as His duly ordained Apostles—that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. . . . He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come.”<sup>7</sup>

Brothers and sisters, if God loves us enough to send us prophets, then we need to love Him enough to follow them. Following the prophets will help protect us against the storms of life and lead us to Christ.

### *The Holy Ghost*

When Christ met with His Apostles in the upper room prior to His Crucifixion, He said: “If ye love me, keep my com-

mandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.”<sup>8</sup>

When hands are laid upon our heads after baptism, we are confirmed members of His Church and then given the gift of the Holy Ghost. If we live righteously and remain worthy, we are promised His constant companionship; He will guide our lives, teach us truths, and testify to us that Jesus is the Christ. As covenant members of the Lord’s Church, we promise to serve Him and keep His commandments “that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon [us].”<sup>9</sup>

### **Pouring out of the Spirit in West Africa**

In West Africa, where we are currently serving, we feel His Spirit being poured out in rich abundance upon the faithful Saints. In 1989 a storm hit Ghana—not a storm of wind or rain but a storm of persecution, slander, and misunderstandings. It was a trying time; the Church was new there. All our non-African missionaries were required to leave the country. Our meetinghouses were locked and guarded so they could not be used by the members. The Saints could not gather together, so they worshiped as families in their own homes. Some members were arrested and even imprisoned.

This period of time is referred to as “the freeze.” Members had little contact or support from the outside Church, but they were not left on their own to weather the storm. They had the scriptures and the

words of the prophets; they put their trust and faith in the Lord, and He poured out His Spirit upon them. One member of the Church said, “We had the Spirit of the Lord with us; we could feel Him guiding and directing us. We drew closer to one another, and we drew nearer to the Savior.”

For 18 months the Saints fasted and prayed for the day when the freeze would end. In November of 1990 the ban was lifted. The worst of the storm had passed, but it had taken its toll. There were those who had fallen away. Their roots had been shallow and their foundation weak. The foundation of the Church in Ghana today is built on the faith of those who weathered the storm. They were deeply rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters, the scriptures, the living prophets, and the Holy Ghost all testify of Christ. They will help us build on “a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.”<sup>10</sup> Of this I humbly testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Helaman 5:12.
2. Jacob 7:9–12.
3. Helaman 5:12.
4. John 5:39.
5. 1 Nephi 4:13.
6. Omni 1:17.
7. “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 3.
8. John 14:15–16.
9. Mosiah 18:10.
10. Helaman 5:12.

## **Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen**

### **Do not wash dirty linen in public**

While driving through a small town in Mexico, a man ran over and killed a dog that darted in front of him. From that day on he was known in the village as *mata-*

*perros*. No consideration or thought was given to the origin of the name; he was simply the “dog killer.” For those who came along later, not knowing the circumstance, their minds conjured up a terrible image of what he had done.

Reputations built on rumor or reality or established by nickname can be virtually impossible to overcome. The adage “Do not wash your dirty linen in public” is wise counsel. It is not necessary, appropriate, or healthy to expose our private or family mistakes and sins for public scrutiny. The more widely a sin is known, the more difficult the repentance or change.

This is not to say that sin should be covered, although that is the natural impulse of anyone who commits a sin. Rather than repent, we want to hide any mistakes or sins committed. But as Cain discovered when he killed Abel, he could not hide his sins from the Lord,<sup>1</sup> for all things are present before Him.<sup>2</sup> He knows of every disobedient act we commit, but—different from the general public—He, with His knowledge of our sins, gives the specific promise that He will remember them no more if we repent.<sup>3</sup>

### Process for washing dirty linen

Washing dirty linen and repentance are intrinsically linked. Sin brings an uncleanliness before the Lord that must be reconciled. There is, however, a time and a place for confession and asking forgiveness. The scope of those parameters depends on the nature and the magnitude of the sin. Where there has been a public offense or a violation of public trust, the responsibility would be to air that wrongdoing in public and ask forgiveness. The span of our responsibility in repentance is to the Lord, His servants, and those we have offended.

There is a parallel between our garments being washed clean through the blood of the Lamb and how we wash our own dirty linen. It is through His atoning sacrifice that our garments will be cleansed. The scriptural reference to garments encompasses our whole being. The need for cleansing comes as we become soiled through sin. The judgment and forgiving

are the Savior’s prerogative, for only He can forgive and wash away our sins.<sup>4</sup>

When King Benjamin gave his great sermon in the land of Zarahemla,<sup>5</sup> the Saints changed their hearts,<sup>6</sup> and there was peace and prosperity throughout the land. Time went by, and Alma was called to preside over the Church. Caught up in their prosperity, some of the members of the Church fell into sin. Alma’s heart was troubled when they were brought before him. Not knowing how to handle the problem, he took them before King Mosiah, but the king remanded them to Alma’s judgment.

Fearing to do wrong in the sight of God, Alma poured out his whole soul to God and pleaded with Him for answers as to how to handle the transgressors. Because of Alma’s great love for his fellowman and his fervent desire to do God’s will, the Lord blessed him mightily, even with a promise of eternal life. Then the Lord explained to him why his pleading for understanding in judgment was so important, saying: “This is *my* Church. It is *my* name through which they will be saved. It is through *my* sacrifice. It is *I* who will judge.”<sup>7</sup>

How often do we forget who has the right to judge? Forgiveness of sin depends on Him, not on us. So the next time we are tempted to hang dirty linen in public, let us remember:

First, go to the Lord.

Second, go to the one we have offended.

Third, if necessary, go to our judge in Israel.

And fourth, then put it away.

### Do not expose others’ faults

Another side of exposing dirty linen is the carnal, insatiable appetite that some have to expose the faults of others. The Lord challenged Job as he was chafing under his burden: “Wilt thou condemn me,

that thou mayest be righteous?"<sup>8</sup> This can happen even in the family when one, supposing he is protecting his *own* good name, exposes in elaborate detail the faults and mistakes of his siblings, his children, or his parents in a form of self-justification designed to alleviate his personal pain.

In the parable of the prodigal son, the prodigal was reclaimed by a faithful father who spoke of his son's worth, not of his faults.

Whenever we tell of others' sins or mistakes, we are in effect passing judgment on them. I heard a man tell his son that an individual would never work for him again because he felt the individual had charged him unfairly. The boy responded, "I'm surprised to hear you say that, Dad, for you have taught us differently."

The father was judging without basis. What should he have done? If he had questions about the charges for the work, he should have discussed them with the man, resolved their differences, and laid it to rest without grouching to others. The Savior taught: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."<sup>9</sup>

When the scribes and the Pharisees brought the woman taken in adultery to Jesus, He stooped and wrote with His finger in the sand so others might not see or hear. Then He said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone." When her accusers had all squirmed away in their sins, He said to the woman, "Go, and sin no more."<sup>10</sup>

### **Do not judge others; forgive and forget**

What should we do when we have knowledge of others' problems?

1. Don't judge. Leave judgment to the Lord, the perfect judge. Let us not examine or explore others' sins but look to

their divinity. It is not ours to delve into others' problems but rather to perceive the breadth of their goodness.

2. We must forgive. Although we may have been personally wounded, the Lord said, "I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men."<sup>11</sup>

3. Forget. A relentless memory can canker the most resilient spirit. Leave it alone; lay it down; put it away.

If the wave of temptation to reveal others' sins comes over you, don't tell your neighbor or even your best friend. Go to your bishop. Leave the burden with him. If it is required, report it to the civil or criminal authorities and then leave it alone. I believe that to receive the precious promise that Alma received requires the same spirit and action he took regarding his, and others', dirty linen.

### **Empathize rather than judge**

But what if we are right and they are wrong? Shouldn't we make our position public so others will not judge us to have made the mistake? The Lord has been clear in His instruction regarding this dilemma. It is not our prerogative to judge. The mote is not ours to measure, for the beam in our own eye obstructs our capacity to see. There is no pancake so thin it has only one side.

Empathy is required here, the gift to feel what others feel and to understand what others are experiencing. Empathy is the natural outgrowth of charity. It stimulates and enhances our capacity to serve. Empathy is not sympathy but understanding and caring. It is the basis of true friendship. Empathy leads to respect and opens the door to teaching and learning. The Sioux Indians understand this great principle as they pray, "Great Spirit, help me to never judge another until I have walked for two weeks in his moccasins."

## Garments cleansed through repentance

So what should we do with dirty linen? The process begins with repentance. The Savior stands at the door and knocks; He is ready to receive us immediately.<sup>12</sup> Our responsibility is to do the work of repentance. We must abandon our sins so the cleansing can begin. The promise of the Lord is that He will cleanse our garments with His blood.<sup>13</sup> He gave His life and suffered for all our sins. He can redeem us from our personal fall. Through the Atonement, the Savior, giving Himself as the ransom for our sins, authorizes the Holy Ghost to cleanse us in a baptism of fire. As the Holy Ghost dwells in us, His purifying presence burns out the filthiness of sin. As soon as the commitment is made, the cleansing process begins.

## Focus on the Savior to be cleansed

Our commitment to the Lord begins with our focus on Him. We were recently in a stake conference in Nauvoo, Illinois. The choir music was exceptional. The director, who is a professional musician and teaches at a local university, was a master at captivating the choir and congregation. Every movement of his body was intrinsically linked to the music. We wanted to sing exactly as he was leading. All eyes were on him. I thought of the Savior. He has challenged us to be as He is. If we would give Him the rapt attention we were giving Brother Nelson, we would quickly be transformed into the Savior's image.

The transformation as we were singing was momentary. We were where we needed to be, and all had a great desire to follow. If we find ourselves in the places we should be, with the fervent desire to follow the Lord, He will touch our lives and cleanse us that we may live in His presence permanently. There was no coercion by the director to get us to sing, just connection. Real repentance comes with

that connection to the Savior. Let us consider our personal prayers and everyday thoughts. We all have work to do to make the connection the Lord requires.

I asked Brother Nelson how he could draw so much out of us. He humbly replied, "Because their hearts are pure."

"What else?" I asked.

He answered, "It is through the Spirit. That is the only way we can communicate at that level."

So where should our focus be? "And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things."<sup>14</sup> That can happen if we take responsibility for our dirty linen through repentance and make sure it is clean.

May we enjoy the Savior's promise through Moroni to "arise . . . and put on thy beautiful garments. . . . Come unto Christ . . . and love God with all your might, mind and strength, . . . that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ . . . through the shedding of [His] blood . . . , which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot."<sup>15</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. See Genesis 4:9–10; Moses 5:34–35.
2. See Moses 1:6.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
4. See Alma 5:21–27; Doctrine and Covenants 64:10.
5. See Mosiah 2–5.
6. See Mosiah 5:2.
7. See Mosiah 26:10–24.
8. Job 40:8.
9. Matthew 7:1–2.
10. John 8:7, 11.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 64:10.
12. See Revelation 3:20.
13. See Revelation 7:14.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 88:67.
15. Moroni 10:31–33.

## President Monson

Thank you, brethren. The choir and congregation will now sing “Come, Ye Children of the Lord.” At the conclusion of the singing, Sister Anne C. Pingree, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, will address us. Following

her remarks, the choir will sing “I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly.” Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then address us.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Come, Ye Children of the Lord.”

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## Sister Anne C. Pingree

### African Saints seek temple recommends

I will never forget a sauna-hot day in the lush rain forest of southeastern Nigeria. My husband and I had traveled to one of the most remote locations in our mission so he could conduct temple recommend interviews with members in the Ikot Eyo district. Some in this growing district had been Church members less than two years. All the members lived 3,000 miles away from the nearest temple in Johannesburg, South Africa. None had received their temple endowment.

These members knew the appointed day each month we would come to their district, but even we didn’t know the exact hour we would arrive; nor could we call, for telephones were rare in that part of West Africa. So these committed African Saints gathered early in the morning to wait all day if necessary for their temple recommend interviews. When we arrived, I noticed among those waiting in the searing heat were two Relief Society sisters dressed in bold-patterned wrappers, white blouses, and the traditional African headties.

Many hours later, after all the interviews were completed, as my husband and I drove back along that sandy jungle trail, we were stunned when we saw these two sisters still walking. We realized they had trekked from their village—a distance of 18 miles round trip—just to obtain a tem-

ple recommend they knew they would never have the privilege of using.

### Recommends are symbols of faith

These Nigerian Saints believed the counsel of President Howard W. Hunter: “It would please the Lord for every adult member to be worthy of—and to carry—a current temple recommend, even if proximity to a temple does not allow immediate or frequent use of it.”<sup>1</sup> In her hand, carefully wrapped in a clean handkerchief, each sister carried her precious temple recommend. I carry their examples of faith carefully wrapped in my heart.

These two covenant Relief Society sisters embody the meaning of Alma’s teaching “concerning faith—faith is *not* to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye *hope* for things which are *not seen*, which are *true*.”<sup>2</sup>

Faith is the most personal reflection of adoration for—and devotion to—our Heavenly Father and His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Anchored by this first and all-important principle of the gospel, we look to our Savior, knowing “Jesus [is] the author and finisher of our faith.”<sup>3</sup>

### Ancestors’ legacy of faith

My great-great-aunt Laura Clark Phelps was the first member of the Clark family who joined the Church. She was a



woman who uniquely demonstrated a faith in the Lord that stands fast, nothing wavering.<sup>4</sup>

Laura's legacy teaches much about the doctrine of faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."<sup>5</sup> She received her patriarchal blessing from Joseph Smith Sr. In it she was counseled to be faithful and she would have an inheritance in Zion. She was further told to "call upon God in faith, and if thou wilt thou shall have all of the desires of thine heart."<sup>6</sup>

Laura and her husband knew the Prophet Joseph Smith. On one occasion the Prophet and his brother Hyrum came running to their farm outside Far West, Missouri, where Laura hid them behind the clothes curtain. She calmly faced the mob leaders who rushed in shortly afterward in search of the Prophet.

Laura experienced the joys and privations of the early Church members in this dispensation. Her faith deepened as she was driven from her homes and separated from her husband on various occasions. As an efficient midwife, she worked and traveled day and night in all kinds of weather to help provide for her family. This overexertion and exposure took their toll. She died at the young age of 34, leaving behind her husband and five children. She did not live to see her children, her grandchildren, or her great-grandchildren following her in faith. She did not experience the blessings of receiving her own temple endowment in this earth life, blessings I believe she would have cherished.

Laura's faithful life bears witness of this verse from Hebrews: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."<sup>7</sup> Faith lived in Laura, and Laura lived her faith.

I love my great-great-aunt Laura and carry her example in my heart. She, like

those Relief Society sisters in Nigeria, reminds me "all things are possible to [them] that [believe]."<sup>8</sup>

### **Faith to see the promises that are afar off**

Faith, the spiritual ability to be persuaded of promises that are seen "afar off" but that may not be attained in this life, is a sure measure of those who truly believe. Elder Bruce R. McConkie expressed this truth in these words: "Faith in its full and pure form requires an unshakable assurance and . . . absolute confidence that [God] will hear our pleas and grant our petitions" in His own due time.<sup>9</sup> Believing that, we too can "stand fast in the faith" today and tomorrow.<sup>10</sup>

It matters not where we live or what our individual circumstances may be. Each day our righteous living can demonstrate a faith in Jesus Christ that sees beyond mortal heartaches, disappointments, and unfulfilled promises. It is a glorious thing to possess a faith that enables us to look forward to that day "when all that was promised the Saints will be given."<sup>11</sup>

As they walked with faith in every footstep along that sandy jungle trail in West Africa, those valiant Nigerian sisters could not have imagined that the walls of a holy temple of God would one day rise in their own nation. They could not have imagined that the inspired words of another prophet of God, President Gordon B. Hinckley, would bring the promised blessings they hoped for and had seen "afar off." They only knew that the Lord restored His gospel in these times, that a testimony of that gospel burned in their hearts, that faith lit their way in life. Then they acted on a prophet's counsel to be worthy and to carry a temple recommend.

### **Miracle of a temple in Nigeria**

My husband and I tenderly recalled these sisters and so many other West African Saints on that remarkable day in

April 2000 when President Gordon B. Hinckley said, “We announce at this conference that we hope to build a house of the Lord in Aba, Nigeria.”<sup>12</sup> Brothers and sisters, I testify that sometimes “miracles . . . confirm . . . faith.”<sup>13</sup> The temples of Africa are a magnificent representation of miracles wrought by the faith of so many Saints in the small villages and large cities spread across that vast continent.

I am deeply grateful that I have seen the faith that brought two pioneers in Africa many miles to a temple recommend interview. I rejoice that the temple in progress in Nigeria will bring these women, their families, and thousands more the opportunity to use their recommends as both a symbol and embodiment of their faith.

### See afar off with spiritual vision

Sometimes those blessings in our lives that we have yet to receive lie beyond the scope of mortal eyes. I testify that it is always faith that allows us to see “afar off” with spiritual vision all that God intends for His children.

Just as surely as the sisters knew—who walked along that sandy jungle trail—I know that God lives. He loves each of us on every continent and desires to bless us one by one. I know that our faith in Jesus

Christ can sustain us each day as we “do all things that lie in our power,” knowing with the “utmost assurance”<sup>14</sup> that those promises we may see “afar off” will one day bring all the blessings we hope for. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. “A Temple-Motivated People,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 5.
2. Alma 32:21; italics added.
3. Hebrews 12:2.
4. See 1 Corinthians 16:13; James 1:6.
5. Hebrews 11:1.
6. Morris Calvin Phelps, *Life History of Laura Clark* (Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, n.d.), microfilm, 3.
7. Hebrews 11:13.
8. Mark 9:23.
9. *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (1985), 187.
10. 1 Corinthians 16:13.
11. “Now Let Us Rejoice,” *Hymns*, no. 3.
12. In Conference Report, Apr. 2000, 111; or *Ensign*, May 2000, 88.
13. Bible Dictionary, “Faith,” 669.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 123:17.

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The choir sang “I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly.”

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## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### Television shows attack values, families

The fall of the year is when television airs its season premieres and introduces its new shows. A friend told me that there are 37 new TV series being inaugurated this fall. As he has read the reviews, he has found few if any of them he would want his children to watch. Most of the sitcoms, dramas, and reality shows contain immorality, violence, and subtle ridicule of traditional values and traditional families. Each

year the new shows seem to get worse, pushing the envelope of what the public will accept. What comes out of Hollywood, off the Internet, and in much of today’s music creates a web of decadence that can trap our children and endanger all of us.

### We must respond to threats against family

Church leaders have the responsibility to speak out on moral issues and to counsel individuals and families. The family is

the basic unit of society; it is the basic unit of eternity. Thus, when forces threaten the family, Church leaders must respond.

The family is at the heart of Heavenly Father's plan because we are all part of His family and because mortality is our opportunity to form our own families and to assume the role of parents. It is within our families that we learn unconditional love, which can come to us and draw us very close to God's love. It is within families that values are taught and character is built. Father and mother are callings from which we will never be released, and there is no more important stewardship than the responsibility we have for God's spirit children who come into our families.

Within this context of the preeminent importance of families and the threats families face today, it is not surprising that the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles used strong words in the proclamation to the world on families: "We warn that individuals . . . who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets."<sup>1</sup> One such prophet was Malachi, who admonished parents to turn their hearts to their children and children to their parents, lest the whole earth be cursed (see Malachi 4:6).

To these warnings, ancient as the Old Testament and current as the proclamation on the family, I add my own voice of warning, specifically concerning today's media and the powerful negative effect it can have on families and on family life.

### **Make wise media choices**

Because of its sheer size, media today presents vast and sharply contrasting options. Opposite from its harmful and permissive side, media offers much that is positive and productive. Television offers history channels, discovery channels, edu-

cation channels. One can still find movies and TV comedies and dramas that entertain and uplift and accurately depict the consequences of right and wrong. The Internet can be a fabulous tool of information and communication, and there is an unlimited supply of good music in the world. Thus our biggest challenge is to choose wisely what we listen to and what we watch.

As the prophet Lehi said, because of Christ and His Atonement, we are "free forever, knowing good from evil," able to act for ourselves rather than be acted upon, "free to choose liberty and eternal life . . . or to choose captivity and death" (2 Nephi 2:26–27).

### **Our lives may mirror our media choices**

The choices we make in media can be symbolic of the choices we make in life. Choosing the trendy, the titillating, the tawdry in the TV programs or movies we watch can cause us to end up, if we're not careful, choosing the same things in the lives we live.

If we do not make good choices, the media can devastate our families and pull our children away from the narrow gospel path. In the virtual reality and the perceived reality of large and small screens, family-destructive viewpoints and behavior are regularly portrayed as pleasurable, as stylish, as exciting, and as normal. Often the media's most devastating attacks on family are not direct or frontal or openly immoral. Intelligent evil is too cunning for that, knowing that most people still profess belief in family and in traditional values. Rather, the attacks are subtle and *amoral*—issues of right and wrong don't even come up. Immorality and sexual innuendo are everywhere, causing some to believe that because everyone is doing it, it must be all right. This pernicious evil is not out in the street somewhere; it is coming right into our homes, right into the heart of our families.

To be strong and happy, families need to be nourished by the truths depicted in the thirteenth article of faith—by a belief “in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men.” Gratefully, there are many like-minded men and women of all cultures and faiths who also seek that which is “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy.”

### **Oppose offensive, destructive media**

But we live in the “perilous times” to which the Apostle Paul referred when he warned about our day as one when “men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, . . . false accusers, . . . despisers of those that are good, . . . heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:1–4).

Conspiring men and women, intent on gain rather than goodness, “stir up the people” to “all manner of . . . wickedness” (Alma 11:20), preventing the noble uses to which the media could be employed.

The new morality preached from the media’s pulpit is nothing more than the old immorality. It attacks religion. It undermines the family. It turns virtue into vice and vice into virtue. It assaults the senses and batters the soul with messages and images that are neither virtuous, nor lovely, nor of good report, nor praiseworthy.

The time has come when members of the Church need to speak out and join with the many other concerned people in opposition to the offensive, destructive, and mean-spirited media influence that is sweeping over the earth.

### **Negative effects of bad media**

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, the percentage of television prime-time shows with sexual content jumped from 67 percent in 1998 to 75 percent in

the year 2000.<sup>2</sup> Media with this kind of content has many negative effects. It fosters a callous attitude toward women, who are often portrayed as objects of abuse and not as precious daughters of God who are essential to His eternal plan. The long-cherished values of abstinence from intimate relationships before marriage and complete fidelity between husband and wife after marriage are denigrated and derided. Children and youth are confused and misled by the deviant behavior they see demonstrated by so-called stars they admire and want to emulate. In the moral confusion created by the media, enduring values are being abandoned.

We see a rapid increase in cyberporn, involving sexual addiction over the Internet. Some become so addicted to viewing Internet pornography and participating in dangerous online chat rooms that they ignore their marriage covenants and family obligations and often put their employment at risk. Many run afoul of the law. Others develop a tolerance to their perverted behavior, taking ever more risks to feed their immoral addiction. Marriages crumble and relationships fail as addicts often lose everything of real, eternal value.

According to one social observer: “Television . . . has replaced the family, the school, and the church—in that order—as the principal [instrument] for socialization and transmission of values. . . . Greed, debauchery, violence, unlimited self-gratification, absence of moral restraint . . . are the daily fare glamorously dished up to our children.”<sup>3</sup>

We must be concerned with the violent and sexually charged lyrics of much of today’s popular music and the relatively new “art form” of the music video. According to industry observers, 40 percent of the music video audience is under the age of 18.<sup>4</sup> One study reports that approximately three-fourths of all the music videos that tell a story utilize sexual imagery, and nearly half involve violence.<sup>5</sup> And the fashion trends spawned in their

images are about as far away from being “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy” as you can get. Ours surely is a time when men “call evil good, and good evil” (Isaiah 5:20).

### **Family is the main target**

Let me say again that the family is the main target of evil’s attack and must therefore be the main point of our protection and defense. As I said once before, when you stop and think about it from a diabolically tactical point of view, fighting the family makes sense to Satan. When he wants to disrupt the work of the Lord, he doesn’t poison the world’s peanut butter supply, thus bringing the Church’s missionary system to its collective knees. He doesn’t send a plague of laryngitis to afflict the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. He doesn’t legislate against green Jell-O and casseroles. When evil wants to strike out and disrupt the essence of God’s work, it attacks the family. It does so by attempting to disregard the law of chastity, to confuse gender, to desensitize violence, to make crude and blasphemous language the norm, and to make immoral and deviant behavior seem like the rule rather than the exception.

### **Join others in raising voices against evil**

We need to remember Edmund Burke’s statement: “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”<sup>6</sup> We need to raise our voices with other concerned citizens throughout the world in opposition to current trends. We need to tell the sponsors of offensive media that we have had enough. We need to support programs and products that are positive and uplifting. Joining together with neighbors and friends who share our concerns, we can send a clear message to those responsible. The Internet Web sites and their local affiliates will have their addresses. Letters

and e-mails have more effect than most people realize, especially those like one sent by a Relief Society sister that stated, “I represent a group of over a hundred women that meets every week and often talks about the harm your program is doing to our children.”

### **Do not support inappropriate media**

Of course the most basic way to protest negative-impact media is simply not to watch it, see it, read it, or play it. We should teach our family members to follow the First Presidency’s counsel to young people. From the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet, their instruction regarding entertainment and the media is very clear:

“Do not attend, view, or participate in entertainment that is vulgar, immoral, violent, or pornographic in any way. Do not participate in entertainment that in any way presents immorality or violent behavior as acceptable. . . .

“Have the courage to walk out of a movie or video party, turn off a computer or television, change a radio station, or put down a magazine if what is being presented does not meet Heavenly Father’s standards. Do these things even if others do not.”<sup>7</sup>

Brothers and sisters, refuse to be used. Refuse to be manipulated. Refuse to support those programs that violate traditional family values. We may be a small voice to begin with; nevertheless, let us speak out and encourage a more uplifting, inspiring, and acceptable media.

### **How to minimize media’s negative effects**

Besides making our voices heard, let me conclude with seven things that every parent can do to minimize the negative effects media can have on our families:

1. We need to hold family councils and decide what our media standards are going to be.

2. We need to spend enough quality time with our children that we are consistently the main influence in their lives, not the media or any peer group.

3. We need to make good media choices ourselves and set good examples for our children.

4. We need to limit the amount of time our children watch TV or play video games or use the Internet each day. Virtual reality must not become their reality.

5. We need to use Internet filters and TV programming locks to prevent our children from “chancing upon” things they should not see.

6. We need to have TVs and computers in a much-used common room in the home, not in a bedroom or a private place.

7. We need to take time to watch appropriate media with our children and discuss with them how to make choices that will uplift and build rather than degrade and destroy.

May God bless us with courage and wisdom in doing what each one of us can to help turn the tide in the media away from darkness toward truth and light. And may God bless our families to be strong and true to the principles of the gospel is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. See Dale Kunkel and others, *Sex on TV 2003: A Biennial Report to the Kaiser Family Foundation* (2003), 40.

3. Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Weak Ramparts of the Permissive West,” in Nathan P. Gardels, ed., *At Century's End: Great Minds Reflect on Our Times* (1995), 53.

4. See National Institute on Media and the Family, “Fact Sheet,” Internet, [http://www.mediafamily.org/facts/facts\\_mtv.shtml](http://www.mediafamily.org/facts/facts_mtv.shtml).

5. See Barry L. Sherman and Joseph R. Dominick, “Violence and Sex in Music Videos: TV and Rock 'n' Roll,” *Journal of Communication*, winter 1986, 79–93.

6. Attributed in John Bartlett, comp., *Familiar Quotations*, 15th ed. (1980), ix.

7. *For the Strength of Youth* (2001), 17, 19.

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The choir sang “A Child’s Prayer.”

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#### President Monson

The choir has just sung that beautiful number “A Child’s Prayer.”

Our concluding speaker at this session will be President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

Following President Faust’s remarks, the choir will sing “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing.” We are truly grateful to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

After the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder H. Aldridge Gillespie of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

As you leave the conference, we ask you to obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

### President James E. Faust

#### “Help thou mine unbelief”

This morning I would like to bear a humble testimony to those who have personal struggles and doubts concerning the divine mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Many of us are

at times like the father who asked the Savior to heal his child with the “dumb spirit.” The father of the child cried out, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”<sup>1</sup> To all those with lingering doubts and questions, there are ways to help your unbelief. In the

process of accepting and rejecting information in the search for light, truth, and knowledge, almost everyone has—at one time or another—some private questions. That is part of the learning process.

Sustaining faith can be the ultimate comfort in life. All of us must find our own testimonies.

### **Developing a testimony of Joseph Smith**

A testimony begins with the acceptance by faith of the divine mission of Jesus Christ, the head of this Church; and the prophet of the Restoration, Joseph Smith. The gospel as restored by Joseph Smith is either true or it is not. To receive all of the promised blessings, we must accept the gospel in faith and in full. However, this certain faith does not usually come all at once. We learn spiritually line upon line and precept upon precept.

Joseph Hamstead, a lecturer at London University, had talked about the Church and its youth and family programs to fellow lecturers at that great university. One of them said, “I like all of this, what is being done for families, and so forth. If you could take out that bit about an angel appearing to Joseph Smith, I could belong to your church.” Brother Hamstead replied, “Ah, but if you take away the angel appearing to the Prophet Joseph, then I couldn’t belong to the Church because that is its foundation.”<sup>2</sup>

Like the professor at London University, many people see the sheer wonder of this Church and are persuaded that it has great merit and substance. They appreciate what the Church can do for its believers. However, they lack the spiritual confirmation that Joseph Smith actually saw in vision the Father and the Son and that an angel delivered to Joseph Smith the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. Coming to know God is the principal spiritual gift that can come to any man or woman. Joseph Smith re-

ceived this knowledge of God firsthand. Many years later, still pondering the impact of that and other happenings in his life, Joseph himself said: “I don’t blame any one for not believing my history. If I had not experienced what I have, I would not have believed it myself.”<sup>3</sup>

No one was with the boy Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove in Palmyra, New York, when God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared. Yet even those who do not believe it happened may find it difficult to explain away. Too much has happened since it occurred to deny that it ever took place.

For those of you who, like the biblical father, say, “I believe; help thou mine unbelief,” you can receive a confirmation by following the direction in the Book of Mormon, which challenges us to “ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ,” regarding the truth that can come only by faith in Christ and by revelation. However, there are two indispensable elements. One must “ask with a *sincere heart*, with *real intent*,” and then God “will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Witnesses confirm Prophet’s testimony**

Strong evidence besides the Book of Mormon corroborates the claims of Joseph Smith. To begin with, the Three Witnesses and the Eight Witnesses, who handled the plates and saw the engravings, testified that the Book of Mormon was translated by the power of God. Members of Joseph Smith’s family, who knew him best, also accepted and believed his message. Among the believers were his parents, his brothers and his sisters, and his uncle John Smith. His older brother Hyrum proved his complete faith in Joseph’s work by giving his life along with Joseph. These reliable witnesses all confirm the Prophet’s testimony.

### Testimonies of Joseph's closest associates

His closest associates were absolute in their belief in Joseph Smith's divine mission. Two of them, Willard Richards and John Taylor, were with Joseph and Hyrum when they were killed. Joseph asked Willard Richards if he would be willing to go with them. Willard unequivocally said:

"Brother Joseph you did not ask me to cross the river with you—you did not ask me to come to Carthage—you did not ask me to come to jail with you—and do you think I would forsake you now? But I will tell you what I will do; if you are condemned to be hung for treason, I will be hung in your stead, and you shall go free."<sup>5</sup>

John Taylor testified, "Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it."<sup>6</sup> The pragmatic Brigham Young said, "I feel like shouting Hallelujah, all the time, when I think that I ever knew Joseph Smith, the Prophet whom the Lord raised up and ordained, and to whom he gave keys and power to build up the Kingdom of God on earth and sustain it."<sup>7</sup> In my opinion, these strong, intelligent men could not have been deceived.

### Sealing power also a witness

It is also very persuasive to me that no other religion claims to have the keys to bind family relationships eternally. President Hinckley said, "Every temple, be it large or small, old or new, is an expression of our testimony that life beyond the grave is as real and certain as is mortality."<sup>8</sup> Those who cherish their family have a compelling reason to claim the transcendent blessing of being sealed for eternity in the temples of God. For all grandparents, parents, husbands, wives, children, and grandchildren, this sealing power and authority is a crowning principle, a pinnacle in the restoration "of all things"<sup>9</sup> through

the Prophet Joseph Smith. Sealings bind forever. This blessing can be extended to those now living and also vicariously for those who have died, thus binding families for eternity.<sup>10</sup>

### Strength of Church is another evidence

Another powerful evidence of the divinity of this holy work is the remarkable growth and strength of this Church worldwide. It is a unique institution. Nothing quite compares to it. As Gamaliel reasoned when Peter and the early Apostles were testifying of the divinity of Jesus Christ, "If this . . . work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it."<sup>11</sup>

This all being true, however, every person must have a spiritual confirmation by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is more powerful than all the senses combined. To those who say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief," may I suggest that "you look forward with an eye of faith."<sup>12</sup> To those who do this, the Lord has promised, "I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart."<sup>13</sup>

### Flickering faith and apostasy

Some reasons people give when the fire of their faith flickers and dies include human frailties and the imperfections of others; something in the history of the Church they cannot understand; changes in procedures resulting from growth and continuous revelation; indifference; or transgression.

At one time the Lord said that He was "well pleased" with Joseph Wakefield.<sup>14</sup> He was stalwart and faithful and taught hundreds about the prophetic work of Joseph Smith. But from 1833 to 1834 he was influenced by some dissidents in Kirtland. He was once in the home of Joseph Smith. Joseph came out of the room where



he had been translating the word of God and immediately began to play with some children. “This convinced [Brother Wakefield] that [Joseph] was not a man of God and that [therefore] the work was false.”<sup>15</sup> In due course, Joseph Wakefield apostatized, was excommunicated, and became a persecutor of the Church and the Saints.

### **Conversion of an inactive member**

One inactive member was jolted into the realization that she was not truly converted to the Church when her son went on a mission. Comparing herself to others whose impressive conversion stories she had heard, she asked herself, “Why are these people converted so powerfully, and I, with my pioneer heritage, remain unconverted?” She began to read the Book of Mormon even though she doubted its worth and found it boring. Then a friend challenged her. She said, “You say you believe in prayer. Well, why don’t you pray about it?”

This she did, and after she prayed she began to read the Book of Mormon again. It was no longer boring. The more she read, the more fascinated she became with it and thought, “Joseph Smith couldn’t have written that—these words were from God!” She finished reading it and wondered how God would tell her that it was true. She said:

“A power strong, beautiful, and joyful moved completely through my body. . . . I knew that Jesus Christ was resurrected, . . . that Joseph Smith was a prophet who saw God and Jesus Christ. I knew that he miraculously translated ancient records with God’s guidance. I knew that Joseph Smith received revelations from God.”

It changed her life because now she too was a convert!<sup>16</sup>

### **Do not let offenses weaken your faith**

For those whose faith has faded, the reasons may be real to them, but these

reasons do not change the reality of what Joseph Smith restored. The Prophet Joseph Smith said, “I never told you I was perfect; but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught.”<sup>17</sup> One cannot successfully attack true principles or doctrine, because they are eternal. The revelations that came through the Prophet Joseph Smith are still correct! It is a mistake to let distractions, slights, or offenses pull down our own house of faith.

We can have a certain testimony that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and the Redeemer of mankind, and that Joseph Smith was a prophet commissioned to restore the Church in our day and time without having a complete understanding of all gospel principles. But when you pick up a stick, you pick up both ends. And so it is with the gospel. As members of the Church, we need to accept all of it. Even limited spiritual assurance of some of the aspects of the gospel is a blessing, and in time the other elements of which you are uncertain can come through faith and obedience.

### **Indebted to Joseph Smith**

The gap between what is popular and what is righteous is widening. As prophesied by Isaiah, many today “call evil good, and good evil.”<sup>18</sup> Revelations from the prophets of God are not like offerings at the cafeteria, some to be selected and others disregarded. We are greatly indebted to the Prophet Joseph Smith for the many great revelations which came through him. He was without peer in restoring spiritual knowledge.<sup>19</sup> There has been a fulfillment of the revelation given to Joseph Smith in March 1839:

“The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name, and fools shall have thee in derision, and hell shall rage against thee;

“While the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under thy hand.”<sup>20</sup>

## Strengthen faith by exercising it

To those who believe but wish their belief to be strengthened, I urge you to walk in faith and trust in God. Spiritual knowledge always requires an exercise of faith. We acquire a testimony of the principles of the gospel by obediently trying to live them. Said the Savior, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine.”<sup>21</sup>

A testimony of the efficacy of prayer comes through humble and sincere prayer. A testimony of tithing comes by paying tithing. Do not let private doubts separate you from the divine source of knowledge. Prayerfully go forward, humbly seeking eternal light, and your unbelief will be dispelled. I testify that if you continue in the purposeful process of searching for and accepting spiritual light, truth, and knowledge, it will surely come. By going forward in faith, you will find that your faith will increase. Like a good seed, if it is not cast out by your unbelief, it will swell within your breast.<sup>22</sup>

## Testimony is a spiritual energizer

I believe that every person’s individual testimony of Jesus as the Christ comes as a spiritual gift. No one can successfully dispute or challenge it because it is so personal a gift to the one to whom it has been given. It will be as an ever-recharging spiritual energizer to keep our spiritual light running to show us the way to eternal happiness. But I testify that it can be more—much, much more. By covenanting with “God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments in all things that he

shall command us, all the remainder of our days,” our “hearts are changed through faith on [Christ’s] name.” Thus we may be “born of him and . . . become his sons and his daughters.”<sup>23</sup> I have a certain knowledge of this, which I declare in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Mark 9:17, 24.
2. Personal correspondence.
3. *History of the Church*, 6:317.
4. Moroni 10:4–5; italics added.
5. *History of the Church*, 6:616.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 135:3.
7. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 458.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 91; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 74.
9. Acts 3:21.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:15–16.
11. Acts 5:38–39.
12. Alma 5:15.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 50:37.
15. George A. Smith, *Deseret News*, 20 Jan. 1858, 364.
16. See Grace Jorgensen, “Every Member a Convert,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1980, 70–71.
17. *History of the Church*, 6:366.
18. Isaiah 5:20.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 135:3.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 122:1–2.
21. John 7:17.
22. See Alma 32:28.
23. Mosiah 5:5, 7.

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The choir sang “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing.”

Elder H. Aldridge Gillespie offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 173rd Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, October 4, 2003, at 2:00 P.M. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by a single adult choir from the Utah South Area. James C. Kasen directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the second general session of the 173rd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, radio, or the Internet and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a single adult choir from the Utah South Area, under the direction of James C. Kasen, with Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "Count Your Blessings." The invocation will then be offered by Elder D. Lee Tobler of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Count Your Blessings."

Elder D. Lee Tobler offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

The choir will now sing "Be Thou Humble," after which President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will present the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

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The choir sang "Be Thou Humble."

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## The Sustaining of Church Officers

### **President James E. Faust**

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas

Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B.

Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

With gratitude for their service as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy, we extend an honorable release to Elders Angel Abrea, William R. Bradford, and Cree-L Kofford and designate them as emeritus General Authorities. All who wish to join with us in doing so, please manifest it.

We extend an honorable release to Elders Duane B. Gerrard, J. Kent Jolley, and D. Lee Tobler as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy and to the following as Area Authority Seventies: Henry F. Acebedo, Blair S. Bennett, Craig A. Bullock, Raimondo Castellani, Christopher N. Chukwurah, Lawrence R. Fuller, Rubén G. Gápiz, Harvey L. Gardner, Francisco G. Giménez, John A. Grincer, Shih An Liang, Emmanuel O. Opare Sr., Alain A. Petion, Claudio D. Signorelli, R. Lloyd Smith, Tomás Valdés, Chung Hei (Patrick) Wong. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation, please indicate by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks Elders Glenn L. Pace and Spencer J. Condie as counselors in the Young Men general presidency. All in favor, please signify by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we sustain José A. Castro, William K. Jackson, Paul V. Johnson, and Jay L. Sitterud as Area Authority Seventies. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Lynn G. Robbins and Donald L. Hallstrom as counselors in the Young Men general presidency. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Those opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and prayers.

### **President Monson**

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which we shall hear from Elder Shirley D. Christensen of the Seventy.

## **President Boyd K. Packer**

### **The source of our high standards**

It is my purpose to explain to the youth and young adults, and to their parents, why we hold so rigidly to high standards of moral conduct; why we avoid addictive drugs and tea, coffee, alcohol,

and tobacco; why we teach standards of modesty in dress, grooming, and speech.<sup>1</sup> You need to know where our standards came from and why we cannot loosen up and follow what the world does.

You have agency—"moral agency."<sup>2</sup> You are free to choose your standards.

You will understand better if I speak of scripture and doctrine rather than about behavior.

### **Standards revealed in the Restoration**

The church you belong to, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is the restored Church.<sup>3</sup> When you know what *restored* means, you will understand why standards of conduct are as they are.

Following the Crucifixion of Christ, an apostasy occurred. Leaders began to “teach for doctrines the commandments of men.”<sup>4</sup> They lost the keys of authority and closed themselves off from the channels of revelation. That lost authority could not just be repossessed. It had to be restored by those who held the keys of authority anciently.<sup>5</sup>

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not a remodeled version of another church. It is not an adjustment or a correction or a protest against any other church. They have their “form of godliness”<sup>6</sup> and their goodness and value.

John the Baptist returned through the veil to confer the Aaronic Priesthood, “which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.”<sup>7</sup> A companion ordinance—confirmation and the conferral of the gift of the Holy Ghost—required a greater authority.<sup>8</sup>

Soon thereafter, Peter, James, and John, Apostle companions of the Lord, restored the higher or Melchizedek Priesthood<sup>9</sup>—“the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God.”<sup>10</sup>

The Restoration did not come all at once. In a series of visitations, other prophets came to restore the keys of the priesthood.<sup>11</sup>

With the authority restored, the organization was revealed. Apostles were ordained, and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and First Presidency were organized as they had been anciently.<sup>12</sup> The

ordinances were revealed and authority given to perform them.

The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ was translated and published. In it is “the fulness of [the] everlasting gospel.”<sup>13</sup>

Other revelations were published—the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price. From those books of scripture, we learned why the earth was created and who created it.<sup>14</sup> There was opened to the early leaders of the Church the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the *standards* He requires of His disciples.

### **Standards part of the plan of happiness**

We learned about the plan of redemption—“the great plan of happiness.”<sup>15</sup> We came to earth to be tested and to gain experience, with a promise that “through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”<sup>16</sup>

Before we came into mortal life, we lived as spirit children of our Father in Heaven.<sup>17</sup> “All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each [of you] is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, [you have] a divine nature and destiny. Gender [male and female] is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.”<sup>18</sup>

The great plan of happiness enables family relationships to last beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants, available only in the temple, make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally. Marriage, the family, and the home are the foundation of the Church.<sup>19</sup> Nothing is more important to the Church and to civilization itself than the family!

For some, all is not complete in mortal life, for marriage and a family of their own have passed them by. But the great plan of happiness and the laws which govern it continue after death. Watched over

by a kind and loving Heavenly Father, they will not, in the eternal pattern of things, be denied blessings necessary for their exaltation, including marriage and family. And it will be sweeter still because of the waiting and the longing.

### **Standards of morality**

We learned from the revelations that we do not have to tell you young people what is right and what is wrong with regard to morality and marriage. The prophet Lehi taught his youthful children that “men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil.”<sup>20</sup>

Because the power to create a mortal body is essential to our happiness and exaltation, the Lord has decreed severe penalties for the immoral use of that power to beget life.<sup>21</sup>

Satan knows that if he can corrupt the process of mating and cause men and women to degrade it in immoral acts, he will, to that degree, for them disrupt the plan of happiness.

### **Be on guard; pray for strength**

Paul taught, “God . . . will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”<sup>22</sup>

I do not wish to offend the delicate feelings of you wonderful young people, but in your world awash with iniquity, you must be on guard.

There are words we would rather not say. They describe things we would rather not think about. But you are inescapably exposed to temptations in connection with fornication, adultery, pornography, prostitution, perversion, lust, abuse, the unnatural, and all that grows from them. Only with difficulty can you escape the degrading profanity and wicked, joking humor that accompanies them. It is all paraded before you in unworthy entertainment—

music, print, drama, film, television, and, of course, the Internet.

Remember the First Vision, when young Joseph knelt in the grove. Immediately thick darkness gathered around him. He was seized by the power of the enemy, an actual being from the unseen world. He did what every one of you can do. He called upon God, and the evil power left him.<sup>23</sup>

There is great power in prayer. As a son or a daughter of God, you can, as Joseph did, pray to God in the name of Jesus Christ for strength.<sup>24</sup>

Satan, with his angels, will try to capture your thoughts and control what you do. If he can, he will corrupt anything that is good.<sup>25</sup> To him the Internet is just that—a net to ensnare you into a wicked addiction with pornography. Unhappiness will follow.<sup>26</sup>

### **We cannot yield to changing standards**

Some work through political, social, and legal channels to redefine morality and marriage into something unrestrained, unnatural, and forbidden. But they never can change the design which has governed human life and happiness from the beginning. The deceiver preys on some passion or tendency or weakness. He convinces them that the condition cannot be changed and recruits them for activities for which they never would volunteer.

But sooner or later that spark of divinity in each of them will ignite. They can assert their agency as sons and daughters created in the image of God<sup>27</sup> and renounce the destroyer. That which they had been led to believe could not be changed, will be changed, and they will feel the power of the redemption of Christ.<sup>28</sup> Their burden will be lifted and the pain healed up.<sup>29</sup> That is what the Atonement of Christ is all about.

They can claim their inheritance as children of heavenly parents and, despite

the tortured, agonizing test of mortal life, know that they are not lost.

In the Church, one is not condemned for tendencies or temptations. One is held accountable for transgression.<sup>30</sup> If you do not act on unworthy persuasions, you will neither be condemned nor be subject to Church discipline.

We do not set the standards, but we are commanded to teach them and maintain them. The standard remains abstinence before marriage and total fidelity in marriage. However out of step we may seem, however much the standards are belittled, however much others yield, we will not yield; we cannot yield. Obedience to the moral standard and observance of the Word of Wisdom will remain as requirements for ordination to the priesthood, for a mission, and for a temple recommend.

### **Let the Holy Ghost guide you**

You had conferred upon you the gift of the Holy Ghost. There will be whisperings of approval or warning when you have decisions to make.<sup>31</sup> The Holy Ghost can guide you away from evil and bring you back if you have wandered and lost your path. Never forget that you are sons and daughters of God. Satan cannot forever imprison you. You always hold the key of repentance to unlock the prison door.

### **Millions stand with you**

If you, our youth, feel alone, remember there are millions of you in the Church now. Tens of thousands of you at this moment serve missions. You are a visible example, a testimony of the Restoration, even to those who will not listen to your message. Wherever you are—in school, at work or play, or in the military—you are never alone.

Now, words can be used as weapons against you. If they throw the word *diversity* at you, grab hold of it and say, “I am already diverse, and I intend to stay di-

verse.” If the word is *tolerance*, grab that one too, saying, “I expect you to be tolerant of my lifestyle—obedience, integrity, abstinence, repentance.” If the word is *choice*, tell them you choose good, old-fashioned morality. You choose to be a worthy husband or wife, a worthy parent.

The whole Church may stand alone in defense of these standards. But we are not the first. Moroni, the last of his people, said: “I even remain alone. . . . I fulfil the commandment of my father.”<sup>32</sup> Do not be afraid.<sup>33</sup>

When I was young and very new in my calling, I was sent east to meet with powerful, prominent officials who were blocking our work. As I left for the airport, I stopped to see President Harold B. Lee and asked, “Do you have any parting counsel?”

“Yes,” he said, “just remember this isn’t 1830, and there aren’t just six of us.”

That erased fear. I pled our cause. The problem was resolved.

Society is on a course that has caused the destruction of civilizations and is now ripening in iniquity. Civilization itself is at stake. You, our wonderful youth, are an example to untold millions of good people worldwide.

I think of the joy and happiness that await you in this life and the work you are to do, and I cannot be discouraged.

### **The standard of truth has been erected**

Peter, the Apostle who stood next to the Lord, said of you, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”<sup>34</sup>

Remember this great prophecy: “The Standard of Truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; . . . the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited

every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done.”<sup>35</sup>

### True to the faith

When we were young, we often used to sing these words:

Shall the youth of Zion falter  
In defending truth and right?  
While the enemy assaileth,  
Shall we shrink or shun the fight? No!

True to the faith that our parents have  
cherished,  
True to the truth for which martyrs  
have perished,  
To God's command, Soul, heart, and  
hand,  
Faithful and true we will ever stand.

While we know the pow'rs of darkness  
Seek to thwart the work of God,  
Shall the children of the promise  
Cease to grasp the iron rod? No! . . .

We will work out our salvation;  
We will cleave unto the truth;  
We will watch and pray and labor  
With the fervent zeal of youth. Yes! . . .

We will strive to be found worthy  
Of the kingdom of our Lord,  
With the faithful ones redeemed  
Who have loved and kept his word. Yes!

True to the faith that our parents have  
cherished,  
True to the truth for which martyrs  
have perished,  
To God's command, Soul, heart, and  
hand,  
Faithful and true we will ever stand.<sup>36</sup>

God bless you millions of youth in our Church who worthily follow the patterns of the gospel and have within you a deep testimony—the testimony that all of us share and bear. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See *For the Strength of Youth* (pamphlet, 2001).
2. Doctrine and Covenants 101:78.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 115:4.
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:19; see also Matthew 15:9.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:12–13.
6. Joseph Smith—History 1:19.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 13:1.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:41; 33:15.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:12–13; Joseph Smith—History 1:72.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 107:3.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 110.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:9; 20:1–2; 107:22, 29.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 27:5.
14. See Moses 1:30–39.
15. Alma 42:8; see also 2 Nephi 11:5; Alma 12:25; 17:16; 34:9; 41:2; 42:5, 11–13, 15, 31; Doctrine and Covenants 101:22; Moses 6:62.
16. Articles of Faith 1:3.
17. See Numbers 16:22; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Hebrews 12:9.
18. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
19. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
20. 2 Nephi 2:5.
21. See Jacob 3:12; Doctrine and Covenants 42:24; 104:8–9.
22. 1 Corinthians 10:13.
23. See Joseph Smith—History 1:15–16.
24. See James 4:7.
25. See Doctrine and Covenants 10:22; see also Luke 22:3; 2 Nephi 2:17–18, 27; 3 Nephi 18:18; Doctrine and Covenants 50:3.
26. See Alma 41:10.
27. See Genesis 1:26–27; Moses 2:26–27; 6:9; Abraham 4:26–27.
28. See 2 Nephi 2:1–6.
29. See Alma 7:11–12.
30. See Doctrine and Covenants 101:78; Articles of Faith 1:2.
31. See Doctrine and Covenants 8:2–3; 9:7–9.



32. Mormon 8:3.

33. See 2 Timothy 1:7; Doctrine and Covenants 68:6.

34. 1 Peter 2:9.

35. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:540.

36. "True to the Faith," *Hymns*, no. 254.

## Elder Robert D. Hales

### How to gain a testimony

As Church leaders we are often asked, "How do I receive a testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ?"

Gaining a testimony and becoming converted begins with study and prayer, then living the gospel with patience and persistence and inviting and waiting upon the Spirit. The life of Joseph Smith and the pattern of the Restoration are excellent examples of this process. As you listen to my message today of the events of the Restoration, look for the steps that lead to testimony: desiring to know the truth, pondering in our hearts, then feeling and obediently following the promptings of the Holy Ghost.

### The Great Apostasy leads to confusion

Joseph Smith was born on December 23, 1805, in Sharon, Vermont. He came into a family that prayed and studied the Bible. In his youth he became interested in religion and discovered a "great confusion" over the doctrines of Christ, with "priest contending against priest, and convert against convert."<sup>1</sup>

This confusion was not unique to his community. It began centuries earlier in what has been called the Great Apostasy. The day of Christ "shall not come," said the Apostle Paul, "except there come a falling away first."<sup>2</sup>

A few decades after Christ's Resurrection, His Apostles were killed, His teachings were corrupted, and the priesthood was taken from the earth. But Paul, seeing our day, prophesied "that in the dispensation of the fulness of times [God would]

gather together in one all things in Christ."<sup>3</sup> He would restore Christ's true Church to the earth once more.

Over the centuries, the world was prepared for that restoration. The Bible was translated and published. A new land was discovered. The spirit of reformation swept through the Christian world, and a nation was founded on the principles of freedom.

### Joseph prays to find the true church

Joseph Smith was born in that nation and, at the age of 14, found himself caught in a "tumult of [religious] opinions." Often he asked himself, "If any one of [these churches] be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?"<sup>4</sup>

Joseph turned to the Bible for answers. "If any of you lack wisdom," he read in the Epistle of James, "let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."<sup>5</sup>

Following James's direction, Joseph went to a grove of trees near his home and prayed. As he called upon God, "a pillar of light . . . descended," brighter than the noonday sun, and "two Personages" appeared. "One of them spake . . . , calling [Joseph] by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*"<sup>6</sup>

God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, conversed with Joseph. They answered his question. They taught him that the true Church of Christ had been lost from the earth. Joseph learned that these members of the Godhead were separate and distinct beings. They knew him by name, and They were willing to answer his

prayers. The heavens were opened, the night of apostasy was over, and the light of the gospel began to shine forth.

### **Like Joseph, we must search and pray**

Like Joseph, many of us find ourselves seeking the light of truth. Just as the world was prepared for the Restoration, each of us is prepared to receive the light of the gospel in our own lives. Sometimes that preparation comes through a change in our circumstances—through meeting a new friend, moving to a new community, a change of employment, the birth of a child, the death of a loved one, illness, misfortune, and even tragedy.

During these times of transition, we seek answers to the important questions of life: Who are we? Where did we come from? Why are we here on earth? And where are we going after we die? Joseph was not born with this knowledge, and neither were we. We must find it.

Like Joseph, we must search the scriptures and pray. For many, this means overcoming feelings of doubt and unworthiness, being humble, and learning to exercise faith.

### **Joseph's example of spiritual maturation**

During the three years following his First Vision, Joseph felt very humble. Often, he said, "I . . . felt condemned for my weakness and imperfections."<sup>7</sup> But he did not lose faith or forget the power of prayer.

#### *Prayer in bringing forth the Book of Mormon*

On September 21, 1823, at the age of 17, Joseph knelt to ask "for forgiveness of [his] sins and follies, and [to receive] a manifestation . . . of [his] state and standing before [God]."<sup>8</sup> As he prayed, a light once again appeared, increasing "until the room was lighter than at noonday."<sup>9</sup> In that light there stood a personage dressed in a robe of "exquisite whiteness."<sup>10</sup> He

called Joseph by name and introduced himself as Moroni. He said "that God had a work for [Joseph] to do"<sup>11</sup> and told him of an ancient record written on gold plates, which, when translated, became the Book of Mormon. The book contained a record of the fulness of the gospel, as taught to Moroni's ancestors by Jesus Christ. Joseph was directed to obtain that record, buried near his family's home in a hill which is now called Cumorah.

The next day, Joseph found the plates, but the time had not yet arrived to bring them forth. Moroni instructed Joseph to meet him there that same day each year for the next four years.<sup>12</sup>

Joseph obeyed. Each year he went to the hill, where Moroni gave him instruction concerning the restoration of Christ's Church.<sup>13</sup> Much like the Savior's childhood described in the New Testament, Joseph "increased in wisdom and stature"<sup>14</sup> and "waxed strong in spirit."<sup>15</sup>

So it is for us. Some newly baptized members become discouraged about their wisdom and stature in the gospel—about what they do not know. They forget the obedient effort, gospel tutoring, and spiritual maturation that were part of Joseph's early experiences. Those who are longtime members should also remember that regular spiritual instruction and learning are required if we are to wax strong in the Spirit.

After four years of continued obedience, Joseph received the plates on September 22, 1827, at the age of 21. He also received an ancient instrument for translating them, called the Urim and Thummim. Using this sacred interpreter, along with the Holy Ghost, Joseph began the work of translation in December of that year.<sup>16</sup> In time he was joined by a schoolteacher named Oliver Cowdery, who acted as his scribe.<sup>17</sup>

#### *Prayer leads to restoration of the priesthood*

At the age of 23, Joseph was translating the plates when he and Oliver came

upon a passage about baptism for the remission of sins. Like new investigators, they wanted to know more. Joseph knew what to do.

On May 15, 1829, the two men went into the woods to inquire of the Lord. While they were praying, John the Baptist appeared “in a cloud of light.”<sup>18</sup> He was the one who had baptized the Savior in life. He held the priesthood keys necessary to perform that ordinance by the authority of God.

As Joseph and Oliver knelt before John, he laid his hands on their heads and conferred the Aaronic Priesthood upon them.<sup>19</sup> From that point on, Joseph and Oliver possessed the authority to baptize and confer that priesthood on others.

Today all who want to know whether they should be baptized are invited to follow Joseph and Oliver’s example and pray. And all who are prepared and worthy for baptism may receive it from one whose authority has been passed unbroken from the hands of John the Baptist in this dispensation.

In late May or early June 1829, the Melchizedek, or higher, Priesthood was conferred on Joseph and Oliver by the Apostles Peter, James, and John.

The translation of the Book of Mormon was also completed that June, and the book was published less than a year later, on March 26, 1830.

#### *Prayer leads to visions, restoration of keys*

Twelve days after the Book of Mormon was published, on April 6, the Church was formally organized at the home of Peter Whitmer Sr. in Fayette, New York. As prophesied by Paul, the ancient Church of Christ was once again established on the earth.<sup>20</sup>

But the work of the Restoration was not over. As in times of old, members of the Church were instructed to build a temple, which was dedicated in Kirtland, Ohio, on March 27, 1836. One week later,

on April 3, a meeting was held there. Following a solemn and silent prayer, Joseph and Oliver saw the Lord Jesus Christ standing before them. He who had said, “Foxes have holes, and the birds . . . have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head,”<sup>21</sup> had come to His holy house. Moses, Elias, and Elijah also appeared there and committed the keys of the kingdom, the saving ordinances, to Joseph.<sup>22</sup>

#### **Pattern of prayer in the Restoration**

Brothers and sisters, can we see the pattern? Every major event of the Restoration—the First Vision, the appearance of Moroni and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the priesthood, and the appearance of Jesus Christ following the dedication of His holy temple—was preceded by prayer.

Since that time, 116 temples have been dedicated. I have attended a number of these sacred meetings. Dedicatory prayers have been offered. The Holy Ghost has been present in abundance. During these times, among many others, I have felt the undeniable witness of the Spirit of God, like a fire burning in my heart, that the restored gospel is true.

How did I learn these things? Nephi gives a clear and compelling account of the process, which includes desiring, believing, having faith, pondering, and then following the Spirit. Let’s hear it as related by Nephi:

“For it came to pass after I had *desired* to know the things that my father had seen [in a vision of the tree of life], and *believing* that the Lord was able to make them known unto me, as I sat *pondering* in mine heart I was *caught away in the Spirit* of the Lord, yea, . . . and *the Spirit [spoke] unto me.*”<sup>23</sup>

Once we receive a witness of the Spirit, our testimony is strengthened through study, prayer, and living the gospel. Our

growing testimony brings us increased faith in Jesus Christ and His plan of happiness. We are motivated to repent and obey the commandments, which, with a mighty change of heart, leads to our conversion. And our conversion brings divine forgiveness, healing, joy, and the desire to bear our witness to others.

### **How to begin the process**

Now you may wonder, how does one begin this process? May I suggest accepting the invitation extended by Moroni in the Book of Mormon: “And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.”<sup>24</sup> For some, this happens quickly. For others, it happens gradually over the years.

We are able to receive this spiritual manifestation because the Holy Ghost is “a personage of Spirit” who can “dwell in us.”<sup>25</sup> His mission is to witness of the Father and the Son, convey Their will to us, and teach us “all things what [we] should do.”<sup>26</sup> People everywhere may feel the influence of the Holy Ghost from time to time in their lives. But only those who have been baptized and confirmed can receive the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands by one in authority, which makes His constant companionship possible.

Retaining that companionship requires an earnest effort by Church members. If we are not obedient to the laws, principles, and ordinances of the gospel, the Holy Ghost will withdraw. He cannot be with us if we are angry in our hearts, contentious with our companions, or critical of the Lord’s anointed. He departs whenever we are rebellious, are immoral,

dress or act immodestly, are unclean or profane in mind or body, are slothful in priesthood callings and duties, or commit other sins, for “the Spirit of the Lord doth not dwell in unholy temples.”<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, we must continually repent, partake of the sacrament, be worthy of a temple recommend, and serve the Lord with all our “heart, might, mind and strength.”<sup>28</sup>

### **Strengthen testimony by sharing it**

With the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, we feel a love for God and all His children. This love casts out fear and fills us with the desire to open our mouths. There is no greater gift we can give others than to bear our testimony to them. There is no greater joy we can have than to bring even one soul unto Christ.<sup>29</sup> And there is no greater way to strengthen our own testimony than to share our witness of Him with the world. As we do, our families will be strengthened. Our wards, stakes, and communities will be filled with peace and love, and ultimately the earth will be prepared for the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I know the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is true. I know The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is His Church on the earth today. I know Joseph Smith is a prophet of God and Gordon B. Hinckley is his successor, the prophet and President of the Church today.

I exhort you, I pray for you—if you do not know these things for yourself, follow the example of Joseph Smith and the pattern of the Restoration. Turn to the scriptures. Kneel in prayer. Ask in faith. Listen to the Holy Ghost. Learn that your name and needs are known by our Heavenly Father, just as Joseph’s were. Live the gospel with patience and persistence. And in the name of Jesus Christ, I promise, “If ye will . . . ask [Heavenly Father] in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence

in keeping [the Lord's] commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you."<sup>30</sup>

Jesus Christ lives. This is His work. Of this I bear my special witness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Joseph Smith—History 1:6.
2. 2 Thessalonians 2:3.
3. Ephesians 1:10.
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:10.
5. James 1:5; see Joseph Smith—History 1:11.
6. Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17.
7. Joseph Smith—History 1:29.
8. Joseph Smith—History 1:29.
9. Joseph Smith—History 1:30.
10. Joseph Smith—History 1:31.
11. Joseph Smith—History 1:33.
12. See Joseph Smith—History 1:52–53.
13. See Joseph Smith—History 1:54.
14. Luke 2:52.
15. Luke 2:40.
16. See Joseph Smith—History 1:59, 62.
17. See Joseph Smith—History 1:66–67.
18. Joseph Smith—History 1:68.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 13; Joseph Smith—History 1:68–69.
20. See Ephesians 1:10.
21. Matthew 8:20.
22. See Doctrine and Covenants 110.
23. 1 Nephi 11:1–2; italics added.
24. Moroni 10:4–5.
25. Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.
26. 2 Nephi 32:5.
27. Helaman 4:24.
28. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.
29. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:15.
30. 1 Nephi 15:11.

## Elder Shirley D. Christensen

### United in our love for God

As I look out over this vast congregation, in my mind's eye I see not only those present in the Conference Center but those of you who are participating in this conference in meetinghouses and homes throughout the world. Although you may be near or far away, you are so vital to the work of the Lord and the establishment of the Church where you live.

We are united in our love for God, our Eternal Father. We honor His name and that of His Only Begotten Son, the Savior of the world, even Jesus Christ. In this conference there will be communicated to us—through the power of the Holy Ghost—feelings that will increase our faith in the Father and the Son and our love for the principles of the restored gospel. In turn, those feelings will draw us nearer to Them as we feel Their presence in our lives and desire with all our hearts to know Their will and to become like Them.

### Prophets are called of God

My message and testimony to you is that prophets and apostles stand at the head of this work today as it goes forth to all the world. They have been called of God by revelation. They are indeed prophets, seers, and revelators. The Lord loves them, and as members of the Church, we honor them and look to them as servants of the living God. The clarion call of the prophets is as clear today as it ever was in the past, and the testimony of the prophets will continue to the very moment that the Lord Jesus Christ returns to reign in glory.

We live in wonderful but perilous times. Throughout the earth, the fabric of nations and the collective world appears to be deteriorating. We see discord and enmity between leaders and nations, conflicts between communities, and contention within families. The solution to the ills of the world is found in understanding the doctrines and teachings of the Lord Jesus

Christ and the application of those principles in the lives of every human being. Divine doctrines and teachings have been taught with clarity by prophets, both ancient and modern, as moved upon by the Holy Ghost. As we hear those truths, they are communicated to our hearts and minds by that same Spirit.

As we consider the role of prophets, it is vital to understand that, first, prophets are called of God and He testifies to the world of their calling. The ancient book of Abraham describes an event that occurred in the premortal existence as God looked over the spirits He had created:

“And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born” (Abraham 3:23).

Of Samuel, the Old Testament prophet, the scriptures record: “Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord” (1 Samuel 3:19–20).

The Book of Mormon quotes the Savior in ancient America when He emphasized the value of Isaiah’s Old Testament prophecies:

“And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah.

“For surely he spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel; . . .

“And all things that he spake have been and shall be, even according to the words which he spake. . . .

“ . . . Search the prophets, for many there be that testify of these things” (3 Nephi 23:1–3, 5).

## Prophets teach and testify of Christ

Second, the role of prophets is to teach of Christ and testify of His divinity and His mission. Adam, the first prophet, with his wife, Eve, heard the voice of the Lord and initiated the pattern for the dispensations that would follow. Of that momentous event it is recorded:

“Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God.

“And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.

“And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and their daughters” (Moses 5:10–12).

Helaman, an ancient American prophet, taught his sons Nephi and Lehi:

“And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall” (Helaman 5:12).

Perhaps the most powerful testimony of the Savior in this dispensation was given in 1832 by the Prophet Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon:

“And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the

testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

“For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

“That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created” (D&C 76:22–24).

### **Prophets’ words are recorded and taught**

The third characteristic of prophets is that their teachings are recorded and are taught by succeeding prophets and teachers to the inhabitants of the earth. The Lord said to the Old Testament prophet Moses, “Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them” (Exodus 24:12).

The Lord’s living prophets today have given an equally compelling testimony when in 1995 they testified to the world of the sacred nature of marriage and the family:

“We, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children. . . .

“We declare the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God’s eternal plan. . . .

“We call upon responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

Later they also gave their personal witness, as the Lord’s Apostles, to the mission of Jesus Christ:

“We solemnly testify that His life, which is central to all human history, neither began in Bethlehem nor concluded on Calvary. He was the Firstborn of the Father, the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, the Redeemer of the world. . . .

“We testify that He will someday return to earth. . . . He will rule as King of Kings and reign as Lord of Lords, and every knee shall bend and every tongue shall speak in worship before Him. Each of us will stand to be judged of Him according to our works and the desires of our hearts” (“The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2–3).

At their very core, the doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are intended to convey to the soul of every sincere person who will ask of God in faith a personal testimony of our Lord and Savior and of the role of the prophets from the dawn of time to this very moment. I testify that the succession of prophets has continued from Joseph Smith, the first prophet of this dispensation, to Gordon B. Hinckley, the Lord’s prophet today. Of that I bear my witness and testimony, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

The choir and congregation will now sing “Let Us All Press On.” Elder W. Craig Zwick of the Seventy will then address us. Following Elder Zwick, we shall hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Let Us All Press On.”

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## Elder W. Craig Zwick

### We are in the hands of God

In the eyes and hearts of many people in the world today, there is evidence of doubt, fear, and hopelessness. Much of the insecurity in the world has filtered into our homes and personal lives. No matter what our age or circumstance, we all have a need to know that we have power in the present and hope in the future. Listen to the words of Mormon:

“Know ye not that ye are in the hands of God? Know ye not that he hath all power?” (Mormon 5:23).

Hands are one of the symbolically expressive parts of the body. In Hebrew, *yad*, the most common word for *hand*, is also used metaphorically to mean power, strength, and might (see William Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies* [1978], 205). Thus, hands signify power and strength.

The extended hand of our living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, strengthens, lifts, and inspires people all across the world.

To be in the hands of God would suggest that we are not only under His watchful care but also that we are guarded and protected by His wondrous power.

Throughout the scriptures, reference is made to the hand of the Lord. His divine assistance is evidenced over and over again. His powerful hands created worlds, and yet they were gentle enough to bless the little children.

Consider John’s words describing the resurrected and glorified Savior: “And when I saw him, . . . he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; . . . I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore” (Revelation 1:17–18). When He lays His hand upon us, we, like John, can be alive in Him.

### Healing of a newborn son

Twenty-four years ago, our tiny newborn son struggled for his life in the inten-

sive care unit of a hospital. His lungs were not fully developed because of his premature birth, and he desperately fought for each breath of air. He was so small but with so much will to live. As young and inexperienced parents, my courageous and ever faithful wife, Jan, and I prayed that the Lord’s hand would reach out and somehow help our baby boy continue to breathe.

As I put my trembling hand through the small opening into the isolette, I felt so inadequate and powerless. I took hold of the tiny but perfect hand of our newborn son, and there was a powerful spiritual connection never to be forgotten. Two fingers from each of my hands covered his tiny head as I administered to him.

Our desire for him was pure, but we knew that his earthly experience rested in the Lord’s hands and not in ours or in the medical team who cared for him. I then humbly realized that my quivering hands held power and authority well beyond my own. My fingers on his head symbolized the placing of God’s hands and power upon our son.

Following that blessing, in a moment of emotional peace, my eternal companion and I looked at each other across the isolette, feeling the spirit of renewed hope and comfort born of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the personal effect of His Atonement. It was a powerful witness of His love for an infant son who had just left His presence. We were then better prepared to accept His will for our son. We truly felt we had placed our hands in the hands of the Savior. It was as if the Savior’s own hands provided the critical respiratory aid, allowing our son to breathe and gain sustenance. With each breath and with each incremental bit of progress, we expressed prayerful thanks. Today our healthy son and his indebted parents continue to be so grateful for the Savior’s willing hands.



## The Lord will lift us in times of trouble

Among the supernal promises of coming forth in the morning of the First Resurrection and inheriting “thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers” are the additional promises of “all heights and depths” (D&C 132:19). The great plan of happiness includes a proverbial roller coaster of challenging times along with the most joyful times. Yes, we all have our moments of difficulty and heartbreak. Occasionally they are so difficult for us that we just want to give up. There are times when our steps are unsteady, when we feel discouraged and even reach out in desperation.

Elder Holland reminds us that the “symbol of the cup that cannot pass is a cup that comes in our life as well as in [the Savior’s]. It is in a much lesser way, to a much lesser degree, but it comes often enough to teach us that we have to obey” (Jeffrey R. Holland, *Trusting Jesus* [2003], 42).

Every one of us needs to know that we can go on in the strength of the Lord. We can put our hand in His, and we will feel His sustaining presence lift us to heights unattainable alone.

When a stricken father brought his terribly afflicted son to Jesus, Mark records that “Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose” (Mark 9:27).

## How we learn to trust in the Lord

We must trust in the Lord. If we give ourselves freely to Him, our burdens will be lifted and our hearts will be consoled.

Elder Scott has recently counseled: “Trust in God . . . no matter how challenging the circumstance. . . . Your peace of mind, your assurance of answers to vexing problems, your ultimate joy depend upon your trust in Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ” (Richard G. Scott, in Conference Report, Apr. 2003, 79, 80; or *Ensign*, May 2003, 76, 78).

How do we learn to trust? How do we learn to extend our hand and connect to the comfort provided by the Lord?

Clear instruction came from the Lord to Joseph Smith: “Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me. . . . Pray always, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you” (D&C 19:23, 38).

Here are four keys:

- Learn
- Listen
- Seek the Spirit
- Pray always

The Lord will provide sustenance and support if we are willing to open the door and receive His hand of divine assistance.

President Thomas S. Monson reminds us of the Savior’s willing hand of rescue: “Adored is the hand that saves—even the hand of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. . . . With that hand he knocks upon the door of our understanding” (“Hands,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1990, 5).

## Story of children trusting their parents

Recently our daughter and son-in-law were preparing to enjoy an evening together. They were rushing around trying to get ready and give the babysitter some last-minute instructions. They didn’t really notice the sad countenance of one of the children and the tears in the eyes of another until they were at the door, ready to leave. They realized that their children were apprehensive about their mommy and daddy being away from them. So their parents gathered their four precious children around them. Their daddy asked them to put their hands out in front of them. All eight tiny hands were extended. Mom and Dad then kissed each hand and told them that when they missed them or they were frightened or needed to feel their love, they could put their little hands up to their cheeks and they would be able to feel Mommy’s and Daddy’s presence anytime. They were so happy, and when

our daughter and son-in-law left, they saw four little children standing at the window with smiles on their faces and hands on their cheeks.

They trusted their parents. They knew they were loved.

Just as little children trust, each of us must have that same childlike, unreserved trust. We must all remember that we are sons and daughters of God and that He loves us very much. If we truly understand who we are, we will have an unfailing source of hope and comfort.

We can never complete “the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1) without placing our hand in the Lord’s.

### **Blind runner guided by a friend’s hand**

Several years ago our only daughter decided to compete in a marathon. She trained and worked very hard, along with some of her friends. The race was difficult, and there were times when she wanted to quit. But she kept going, just concentrating on one step at a time. As she was approaching the middle part of the course, she heard someone behind her shout out, “Blind man on your left.”

She turned her head only to see a blind man overtake her, holding the hand of another man. They were both running the race. As they passed, she could see how tightly the blind man held the hand of his friend.

Overcome with her own physical pain, she was lifted as she watched these two men run hand in hand. He who could see was motivated by his blind friend, and the blind man depended upon the connection he had to his friend’s hand. Our daughter

knew the blind man could never finish the race alone. She was inspired by the trust of the blind man and the devoted love of his friend.

### **The Savior extends His hand to us**

In like manner, the Savior stretches forth His hand to each of us so we don’t have to run alone. “To those [of us] who [occasionally] stagger or stumble, He is there to steady and strengthen” (*Trusting Jesus*, 43). As we advance toward the finish line, He will be there to save us; and for all this He gave His life.

Imagine the wounds in His hands. His weathered hands, yes, even His hands of torn flesh and physical sacrifice, give our own hands greater power and direction.

It is the wounded Christ who leads us through our moments of difficulty. It is He who bears us up when we need more air to breathe or direction to follow or even more courage to continue.

If we will keep the commandments of God and walk hand in hand with Him in His paths, we will go forward with faith and never feel alone.

Trust in His promise of eternal life, and allow peace and hope to distill upon you.

When we connect with the Author of Peace and with His perfect and redeeming love, then we can come to know the reality of the Lord’s promise: “I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying . . . , Fear not; I will help thee” (Isaiah 41:13).

I testify of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and living Savior. I testify that He lives and extends His loving hand to each of us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Dallin H. Oaks**

I bring you greetings from the Philip-pines Area, with its 520,000 members in 80 stakes and 80 member districts and its 2,200 missionaries in 13 missions. We are

progressing against the challenges the Church encounters where it is not yet fully established.

In these developing areas, we rely heavily on senior missionary couples. I stress this because there are many within the sound of my voice who need to know how much their service is appreciated, and there are others we pray will decide to be available for this vital service.

### **People forsake old ways, follow the Lord**

My introduction is something said in my presence by one of these valiant missionaries. “As I look back on my life,” he said, “I can hardly imagine a barefoot surfer from Hawaii completing his third mission. But when I felt the warm embrace of the Savior, I wanted to serve Him, and I changed.” Yes he did! Stanley Y. Q. Ho told me that until he was 30 years old he did nothing but “hang around the beaches at Waikiki.” Then he found the gospel, he married a Latter-day Saint girl, and he changed. Since then he has fulfilled many callings, including bishop and stake president. Now, Elder Ho and his beloved Momi, who is responsible for so many of the changes in his life, have served three full-time missions.

For another example, I turn to the Gospel of Luke:

“And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

“And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

“And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

“And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

“And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.

“And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully” (Luke 19:1–6).

Here the Gospel records that Jesus’ followers “murmured” because of His go-

ing to the house of a sinner (v. 7). But that did not matter to Jesus. His gospel is for all who will forsake their old ways and make the changes they need to be saved in the kingdom of God.

Now back to the account of the man who opened his house and his heart to the Lord:

“And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

“And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house. . . .

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (verses 8–10).

Zacchaeus of Jericho and Stanley of Hawaii stand for all of us. They are examples of what we pray will be experienced by all of us who decide to receive the Lord “joyfully” and follow where He leads.

### **Repent of practices contrary to the gospel**

The gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to change. “Repent” is its most frequent message, and repenting means giving up all of our practices—personal, family, ethnic, and national—that are contrary to the commandments of God. The purpose of the gospel is to transform common creatures into celestial citizens, and that requires change.

John the Baptist preached repentance. His listeners came from different groups, and he declared the changes each must make to “bring forth . . . fruits worthy of repentance” (Luke 3:8). Publicans, soldiers, and ordinary people—each had traditions that had to yield to the process of repentance.

The teachings of Jesus also challenged the traditions of different groups. When the scribes and Pharisees complained that His disciples “transgress[ed] the tradition of the elders” by omitting the ritual washings, Jesus replied that the scribes and

Pharisees “transgress[ed] the commandment of God by [their] tradition” (Matthew 15:2–3). He described how they had “made the commandment of God of none effect by [their] tradition” (v. 6). “Hypocrites” is what He called those whose adherence to their traditions kept them from keeping the commandments of God (v. 7).

Again, in modern revelation the Lord declares that the “wicked one” takes the innocent children of God away from light and truth “through disobedience . . . and because of the tradition of their fathers” (D&C 93:39).

### **Give up traditions that conflict with gospel**

The traditions or culture or way of life of a people inevitably include some practices that must be changed by those who wish to qualify for God’s choicest blessings.

#### *Chastity*

Chastity is an example. “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” the Lord commanded from Sinai (Exodus 20:14) and repeated in modern revelation (D&C 42:24; see also D&C 59:6). “Flee fornication,” the New Testament commands (1 Corinthians 6:18; see also Galatians 5:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:3). Always the prophets of God have condemned whoredoms. Yet these eternal commands have frequently been ignored, opposed, or mocked by powerful traditions in many lands. This is especially visible today, when the movies, magazines, and Internet communications of one nation are instantly shared with many others. Sexual relations out of wedlock are tolerated or advocated by many. So is the rapidly expanding culture of pornography. All who have belonged to these cultures of sin must repent and change if they are to become the people of God, for He has warned that “no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom” (3 Nephi 27:19).

### *Church attendance and service*

Weekly attendance at church is another example of a commandment contrary to popular traditions. The Lord has commanded us to attend church and “offer up [our] sacraments” on His Sabbath day (see D&C 59:9). This requires more than passive attendance. We are commanded to participate in worship and in service, and that requires a wrenching change for many non-Christians and even for those Christians who have attended church only as irregular spectators.

#### *Word of Wisdom*

The Lord’s command that we abstain from alcohol, tobacco, tea, and coffee (see D&C 89) also runs counter to the traditions of many. Long-standing addictions or habits are not easily broken, but God’s command is clear, and the promised blessings more than compensate for the challenges of change.

#### *Honesty*

Another example is honesty. Some cultures allow lying, stealing, and other dishonest practices. But dishonesty in any form—whether to appease, to save face, or to get gain—is in direct conflict with gospel commandments and culture. God is a God of truth, and God does not change. We are the ones who must change. And that will be a big change for all whose traditions accustom them to thinking that they can lie a little, cheat a little, or engage in deceit whenever it brings personal advantage and is not likely to be detected.

### *Movement in Church positions*

A less serious worldly tradition that conflicts with gospel culture is the idea of upward or downward movement in positions. In the world, we refer to the up or down of promotions or reductions. But there is no up or down in Church posi-

tions. We just move around. A bishop released by proper authority and called to teach in Primary does not move down. He moves forward as he accepts his release with gratitude and fulfills the duties of a new calling—even one far less visible.

I saw a memorable example of this a few months ago in the Philippines. I visited a ward in the Pasig stake, near Manila. There I met Augusto Lim, whom I had known in earlier years as a stake president, a mission president, a General Authority, and president of the Manila temple. Now I saw him serving humbly and gratefully in his ward bishopric, second counselor to a man much younger and much less experienced. From temple president to second counselor in a ward bishopric is a beautiful example of the gospel culture in action.

### **Contrasting the Lord's way, world's way**

In these examples I am not contrasting the culture or traditions of one part of the world with another. I am contrasting the Lord's way with the world's way—the culture of the gospel of Jesus Christ with the culture or traditions of every nation or people. No group has a monopoly on virtue or an immunity from the commandment to change. Jesus and His Apostles did not attempt to make Gentiles into Jews (see Romans 2:11; Galatians 2:11–16; 3:1–29; 5:1–6; 6:15). They taught Gentiles and Jews, attempting to make each of them into followers of Christ.

Similarly, the present-day servants of the Lord do not attempt to make Filipinos or Asians or Africans into Americans. The Savior invites all to come unto Him (see 2 Nephi 26:33; D&C 43:20), and His servants seek to persuade all—including Americans—to become Latter-day Saints. We say to all, give up your traditions and cultural practices that are contrary to the commandments of God and the culture of His gospel, and join with His people in building the kingdom of God. If we cease to walk in darkness, the Apostle John

taught, “we walk in the light, . . . we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

### **The unique gospel culture**

There is a unique gospel culture, a set of values and expectations and practices common to all members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This gospel way of life comes from the plan of salvation, the commandments of God, and the teachings of the living prophets. It is given expression in the way we raise our families and live our individual lives. The principles stated in the family proclamation are a beautiful expression of our gospel culture.

Those who are baptized in the Church of Jesus Christ make covenants. In modern revelation the Lord declared, “When men are called unto mine everlasting gospel, and covenant with an everlasting covenant, they are accounted as the salt of the earth and the savor of men” (D&C 101:39). To perform our covenant duty as the salt of the earth, we must be different from those around us.

As Jesus taught: “I give unto you to be the salt of the earth; but if the salt shall lose its savor wherewith shall the earth be salted? The salt shall be thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men” (3 Nephi 12:13; see also Matthew 5:13; D&C 101:40).

This requires us to make some changes from our family culture, our ethnic culture, or our national culture. We must change all elements of our behavior that are in conflict with gospel commandments, covenants, and culture.

### **The doctrine of personal responsibility**

The gospel plan is based on individual responsibility. Our article of faith states the eternal truth “that men will be

punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression" (Articles of Faith 1:2). This requirement of individual responsibility, which has many expressions in our doctrine, is in sharp contrast to Satan's plan to "redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost" (Moses 4:1). The plan of the Father and the Savior is based on individual choice and individual effort.

The doctrine and practice of personal responsibility and personal effort collide with individual traditions and local cultures in many lands. We live in a world where there are large differences in income and material possessions and where there are many public and private efforts to narrow these differences. The followers of the Savior are commanded to give to the poor, and many do. But some gifts have promoted a culture of dependency, reducing their recipients' need for earthly food or shelter but impoverishing them in their eternal need for individual growth. The growth required by the gospel plan occurs only in a culture of individual effort and responsibility. It cannot occur in a culture of dependency. Whatever causes us to be dependent on someone else for decisions or resources we could provide for ourselves weakens us spiritually and retards our growth toward what the gospel plan intends us to be.

The gospel raises people out of poverty and dependency, but only when gospel culture, including the faithful payment of tithing even by the very poor, prevails over the traditions and cultures of dependency. That is the lesson to be learned from the children of Israel, who came out of hundreds of years of slavery in Egypt and followed a prophet into their own land and became a mighty people. That lesson can also be learned from the Mormon pioneers, who never used their persecutions or poverty as an excuse but went forward in faith, knowing that God would bless them when they kept His commandments, which He did.

### **Love others and help them change**

The changes we must make to become part of the gospel culture require prolonged and sometimes painful effort, and our differences must be visible. As the "salt of the earth," we are also the "light of the world," and our light must not be hidden (see Matthew 5:13–16). The Apostle John warned that this will cause the world to hate us (see 1 John 3:13). That is why those who have made the covenant to change have a sacred duty to love and help one another. That encouragement must be extended to every soul who struggles to come out of the culture of the world and into the culture of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Apostle John concluded, "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

No one shows love for their fellowmen more impressively than the noble men and women of this Church who leave comfortable homes and surroundings to serve as couple missionaries. They provide the most authentic and the most valuable assistance to those who are struggling to change. God bless our couple missionaries!

### **Repent and obey to show love for God**

Jesus commanded us to love one another, and we show that love by the way we serve one another. We are also commanded to love God, and we show that love by continually repenting and by keeping His commandments (see John 14:15). And repentance means more than giving up our sins. In its broadest meaning it requires *change*, giving up all our traditions that are contrary to the commandments of God. As we become full participants in the culture of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we become "fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19).

I testify that this is what our Lord and Savior would have us do so that we may

become what His gospel intends us to be, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

Thank you, brethren.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Following his remarks, the choir will sing “Come, Ye Disconsolate.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Keith K. Hilbig of the Seventy.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene

in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 P.M.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

As you leave this session of the conference, we ask that you obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

We express also our thanks to the single adult choir from the Utah South Area for the beautiful music they provided this afternoon. Thank you, from each one of us to each one of you.

## **Elder Richard G. Scott**

### **The extraordinary potential of our youth**

Recently I watched over 20,000 young Latter-day Saint men and women listen to a spiritual message. They took notes and concentrated on the speaker, anxious to learn. There radiated from them an intense spirit of purity, righteousness, and devotion. No one had forced them to come. They wanted to be there.

Later I met with over 2,000 full-time missionaries preparing to serve. The room was charged with the Spirit. I asked them difficult questions. They responded extremely well, often citing supporting scriptures. As I shook missionaries' hands and looked into their eyes, I felt purity and a spirit of devotion. It was an inspiring experience. Each had set aside personal interests to accept a call to join what can become our greatest generation of missionaries.

I have had like experiences with youth across the earth. The faculty at our three universities note a significant increase in capacity and spiritual sensitivity of students. Something extraordinary is happening. Do you sense it? Truly, as obedience and morality decline in the world, the Lord is sending more exceptional spirits to

earth. As a body they excel the average capacity of their forebears. Their potential for personal growth and positive contribution is enormous.

As parents and leaders, how are you cultivating that potential? As a young man or woman of this generation, what are you doing to realize your extraordinary potential? Will you nurture it and rise to exceptional heights of accomplishment and happiness? How will you avoid Satan's efforts to undermine your potential through transgression? Only you can answer these critical questions.

### **Make choices to realize your full potential**

With all my capacity I encourage you to discover who you really are. I invite you to look beyond the daily routine of life. I urge you to discern through the Spirit your divinely given capacities. I exhort you to prayerfully make worthy choices that will lead you to realize your full potential.

I will share one sure way you can begin to accomplish such growth. I have seen valiant missionaries brave icy wind, resist torrential rains, slosh through slippery, muddy streets, and conquer fear. Often they bear a powerful testimony, only to be

rejected and roundly criticized. I have seen them struggle to communicate the truth in a new language. Sometimes the listener stares in puzzled silence. Then there dawns the shattering realization that the message is not understood. But I wouldn't change any of it, even if I could, because there are those golden moments of success that make all of the hardships worthwhile.

Such rewards come when the Spirit touches a heart for eternal good because someone like you was there. To share truth in difficult circumstances is to treasure it more. When you push against the boundaries of experience into the twilight of the unknown, the Lord will strengthen you. The beauty of your eternal soul will begin to unfold.

### **Prepare to be an exceptional missionary**

The challenges are greater now than ever. That is why the Lord needs more capable, better prepared missionaries. He needs those who are clean and pure so that they can be guided by the Spirit and can testify with converting power. Qualify to be one of those exceptional missionaries. It will not be easy. But when was anything really worthwhile easy?

The First Presidency has defined high standards of moral worthiness and the physical, mental, and emotional stability missionary service now demands. The standards are rigorous, but you can meet them. You will rejoice in the feelings of peace and confidence that come from living them. The standards were raised not to make it harder but because missionaries now serve in an environment where spiritual guidance is absolutely essential. Also, adjustments have been made in the presentation of the discussions. They are not now memorized; rather, the basic content is learned and given as guided by the Spirit. Personal worthiness is essential to do that (see "Statement on Missionary Work" attached to First Presidency letter, Dec. 11, 2002).

You are of a singular generation with exceptional potential. No wonder Satan wants to cripple that potential by tempting you to violate the laws of God. He knows that he has no power over a righteous individual. Yet he is a master at making sin appealing to the undecided.

### **Preparation at home and church**

Preparation for a mission and a meaningful life best begins in the home. As a parent, one of the greatest gifts you can give a son or daughter is to consistently nurture a growing testimony of truth, patiently nurturing each child's spiritual capacity. Carefully explain the doctrines of the Church and the power they give when well lived. That foundation will equip a child to resist evil in the world. Encourage every son who is physically and emotionally able to prepare to serve worthily a full-time mission.

Bishops and stake presidents, work with priesthood and auxiliary leaders to strengthen the spiritual capacity of your youth. Do that by encouraging their participation in Church activities that fortify the teachings of parents.

As a young man, actively participate in your priesthood quorum. As a young woman, attend class activities and complete your Personal Progress goals. Both of you, be active in Sunday School discussions to retain what is taught. Take part in seminary and institute to gain vital understanding of truth. Don't just listen to pass a test. Incorporate what you study into your life.

### **Study the scriptures and gain a testimony**

Study the First Vision as recorded in Joseph Smith—History in the Pearl of Great Price. Learn of the subsequent events that brought the full restoration of truth, with the priesthood authority and ordinances essential to exaltation. Gain your own testimony of these things. Fix them in your mind and heart.



Try reading the Book of Mormon because you want to, not because you have to. Discover for yourself that it is true. As you read each page, ask, "Could any man have written this book, or did it come as Joseph Smith testified?" Apply the teachings you learn. They will fortify you against the evil of Satan. Follow Moroni's counsel. Sincerely ask God the Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, with real intent, if the teachings of the Book of Mormon are true (see Moroni 10:3–5). Ask with a desire to receive a confirmation personally, nothing doubting. There has to be an explanation of that book you can hold in your hand. I know you can receive a spiritual confirmation that the book is true. You will then know that Jesus Christ lives, that Joseph Smith was and is a prophet, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord's Church (see introduction to the Book of Mormon, especially the last paragraph). You will confirm that the Savior guides His Church through a living prophet. These truths will become a foundation for your productive life.

One may say, "I don't have all the blessings of an ideal family and full Church experience." Neither did I enjoy all those advantages, nor did some other members of the Quorum of the Twelve. Compensate by obtaining your own unwavering testimony of truth. Obtain a personal conviction that the Church of Jesus Christ has been restored to earth and that His doctrines are true. There are different paths to that treasured gift. They begin with your sincere desire to know. The flickering flame of faith can die if you do not nurture it. But that tiny flame can grow into a brilliant, unquenchable fire through sincere prayer and consistent study of the Book of Mormon and other scriptures. Such faith will be sustained as you apply the principles you learn.

Remain worthy. When you really understand who you are, it is not difficult to resist Satan's temptations. Then he can't

thwart the development of your true potential.

### **Serving a mission brings greatest growth**

As a young man, the greatest growth and strengthening experience you can have at this time, bar none, is serving a worthy full-time mission. While a mission is not for personal advantage, the Lord richly blesses those who valiantly serve. Be one of the army of remarkable, well-prepared, devoted missionaries who are qualifying to the high standards of worthiness. Join those who have chosen to serve the Lord, wherever called, however challenging it may be.

Missionary work is extremely demanding. If you have emotional challenges that can be stabilized to meet the rigors of a full-time mission, you can be called. It is vital that you continue to use your medication during your mission or until competent medical authority counsels otherwise. Recognize that emotional and physical challenges are alike. One needs to do all that is possible to improve the situation, then learn to live within the remaining bounds. God uses challenges that we may grow by conquering them.

Your physical or emotional circumstance may be such that you have been excused by the President of the Church from full-time missionary service (see "Statement on Missionary Work" attached to First Presidency letter, Dec. 11, 2002). For you there are other ways to render meaningful service compatible with your condition. Your bishop or stake president can help you identify such service where you live. It could be in a Church family history center, temple, welfare project, or employment center, or in a local hospital, care center, shelter, or elsewhere. There are many places where help is needed. You can live at home and contribute powerfully. Such a call can be for a few months or longer. Your stake president will come

to know where you should serve and for how long. He will then issue a formal call. Whatever your call may be, study the message of the Restoration with materials the full-time missionaries can provide. Then look for opportunities to share that message. As you conscientiously do that, you will be led to individuals who will be touched to learn more.

### **Be what the Lord expects you to be**

As I have spoken of missionary service, you may have thought, "That's not for me." I plead with you to prayerfully reconsider. All that I treasure most in life began to mature in the mission field. You can also earn such blessings.

If you have made bad choices, repent now. Remove any such barrier to your progress and happiness.

You are a precious young man or woman. Realize your full potential. Be the leader and example the Lord expects you to be. Young man, be a part of the greatest generation of missionaries. Worthy youth, prepare to receive the temple ordinances and to raise your eternal family. God loves you. I testify that as you seek His help, He will guide you to fulfill your worthy dreams, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Come, Ye Disconsolate."

Elder Keith K. Hilbig offered the benediction.

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## **GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION**

The general priesthood session of the 173rd Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, October 4, 2003, at 6:00 P.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a priesthood choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center. Douglas Brenchley directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

We welcome you, brethren, to this general priesthood session of the 173rd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, the Provo Missionary Training

Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a priesthood choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center, under the direction of Douglas Brenchley, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

We shall begin this session with the choir singing "Hark, All Ye Nations!" The invocation will then be offered by Elder William R. Bradford, who received emeritus status this afternoon.

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The choir sang "Hark, All Ye Nations!"

Elder William R. Bradford offered the invocation.

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### **President Hinckley**

This magnificent choir will now sing "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go." After the singing, Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker, after which we shall

hear from Elder Monte J. Brough of the Seventy. He will be followed by Elder Merrill J. Bateman of the Presidency of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go.”

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## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### Faith of a little orphan boy

My dear brethren of the priesthood, though we are from many nations, we are, as Paul said, of “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”<sup>1</sup> But the *strength* of the faith within each of us is developed individually, not as a group.

For example, think of the faith of a boy, about eight years of age, who was facing an emergency operation for acute appendicitis. As he lay on the operating table, he looked up at the surgeon and said, “Doctor, before you begin to operate, will you pray for me?”

The surgeon looked at the boy in amazement and said, “Why, I can’t pray for you.”

Then the little fellow said, “If you won’t pray for me, please wait while I pray for myself.” There on the operating table, the boy got on his knees, folded his hands, and began to pray. He said, “Heavenly Father, I am only a little orphan boy. I am awful sick, and these doctors are going to operate. Will you please help them that they will do it right? Heavenly Father, if you will make me well, I will be a good boy. Thank you for making me well.” He then lay on his back, looked up at the tear-filled eyes of the doctors and nurses, and said, “Now I am ready.”<sup>2</sup>

His physical recovery was complete, and his spiritual power was developing.

### Develop power in the priesthood

You brethren are older and have had the priesthood conferred upon you. Your priesthood quorums provide opportunities for friendship, service, and learning.

But the responsibility to develop power in the priesthood is personal. Only as an individual can you develop a firm faith in God and a passion for personal prayer. Only as an individual can you keep the commandments of God. Only as an individual can you repent. Only as an individual can you qualify for the ordinances of salvation and exaltation. And when your wife is sealed to you, her power and potential will increase yours.

I belong to a wonderful priesthood quorum. We enjoy a precious brotherhood. We pray together; we serve together. We teach, love, and sustain one another. The Twelve come from different backgrounds—business, education, law, and science. But not one was called to serve because of that background. In fact, all men called to positions of priesthood responsibility are chosen because of who they are and who they can become.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout life you will have a wide variety of duties and responsibilities. Many of these are temporary and will be relinquished upon your release. (You probably won’t object to your release from a call to pull weeds at the welfare farm.) But you never will be released from responsibilities related to your personal and family development.

When ordained to an office in the priesthood, you are granted authority. But power comes from exercising that authority in righteousness.

### Responsibility to the Lord

From the President of the Church to the newest deacon, we are responsible to the Lord. We are to be true and faithful

and live by every principle and doctrine that He has given to us. We cannot compromise a revelation or a commandment committed to our charge. He trusts us to “build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness.”<sup>4</sup>

One day each of us will give an account to the Lord.<sup>5</sup> This awareness was evident in a serious conversation I had years ago with a dear friend facing the end of his mortal life. I asked him if he was ready to die. I’ll never forget his answer. With courage and conviction, he said, “My life is ready for inspection.”

When the Prophet Joseph Smith faced death, he said, “I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer’s morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men.”<sup>6</sup>

Now is the time to prepare for your own ultimate interview. You might ask yourself, “Do I pay tithing with a willing heart? Do I obey the Word of Wisdom? Is my language free from obscenities and swearing? Am I morally righteous? Am I truly grateful for the Atonement, which makes my resurrection a reality and eternal life a possibility? Do I honor temple covenants that seal loved ones to me forever?” If you can honestly say yes, you are developing power in the priesthood.

The gift of the Holy Ghost can add to that power. The scriptures tell of people who had received the Holy Ghost but did not know it.<sup>7</sup> Don’t let that happen to you. Cultivate that gift and qualify for this promise from God: “Speak the thoughts that I shall put into your hearts, and you shall not be confounded before men; For it shall be given you in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what ye shall say.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Priesthood in this dispensation**

Priesthood authority has existed in many dispensations, such as those of Adam, Noah, Enoch, Abraham, Moses,

the meridian of time, the Jaredites, the Nephites, and others. All previous dispensations were limited in time, as each ended in apostasy. They were also limited to small segments of planet Earth. In contrast, our dispensation—the dispensation of the fullness of times—will not be limited in time or place. Globally, it will host a whole, complete, and perfect union, welding together dispensations, keys, powers, and glories from the days of Adam even to the present time.<sup>9</sup>

The Aaronic Priesthood was restored on May 15, 1829, by John the Baptist; the Melchizedek Priesthood was restored shortly thereafter by Peter, James, and John.<sup>10</sup> Other heavenly messengers conveyed specific keys of the priesthood. Moroni held keys of the Book of Mormon.<sup>11</sup> Moses brought keys of the gathering of Israel and the leading of the ten tribes.<sup>12</sup> Elias conveyed keys of the restoration of all things,<sup>13</sup> including the Abrahamic covenant.<sup>14</sup> And Elijah conferred keys of the sealing authority.<sup>15</sup>

### **Priesthood keys**

You know something about keys. In your pocket there might be a key to your home or car. Priesthood keys, on the other hand, are intangible and invisible. They “switch on” the authority of the priesthood. Some keys even convey power to bind in heaven as well as on earth.<sup>16</sup>

Joseph Smith conferred priesthood keys upon all of the Twelve.<sup>17</sup> Those keys have been transferred to successive leaders. Today President Gordon B. Hinckley holds authority for every restored key held by “all those who have received a dispensation at any time from the beginning of the creation.”<sup>18</sup>

With this doctrinal history in mind, it is clear that one cannot buy the priesthood. Scripture declares that “no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”<sup>19</sup>

## **Magnify callings in the priesthood**

To bear the priesthood means you have a personal responsibility to magnify your calling. Let each opportunity to serve help to develop your power in the priesthood. In your personal grooming, follow the example of the living prophets. Doing so gives silent expression that you truly comprehend the importance of “the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God.”<sup>20</sup>

When you brethren have an opportunity to exercise the Melchizedek Priesthood, ponder what you are to do. When you lay hands upon the head of another, you are not offering a prayer, which of course requires no authority. You are authorized to set apart, to ordain, to bless, and to speak in the name of the Lord.<sup>21</sup> Remember His promises: “Whomsoever you bless I will bless,”<sup>22</sup> and “I will impart unto you of my Spirit, . . . and then shall ye know . . . all things . . . pertaining unto things of righteousness, in faith believing in me that you shall receive.”<sup>23</sup>

## **Objectives for Aaronic Priesthood holders**

To magnify your callings in the Aaronic Priesthood, you young men should shape your personal efforts toward five personal objectives to:

- Gain a knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Be worthy of missionary service.
- Keep yourself morally clean and qualified to enter the holy temple.
- Pursue your personal education.
- Uphold Church standards and be worthy of your future companion.

How can you remember those five objectives? It's easy. Look at your hand. Let your pointer finger point to the scriptures. From them gain a better knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and then live in accord with His teachings. Let your middle finger remind you to be worthy of missionary service. Let your ring finger re-

mind you of marriage, endowment, sealing, and blessings of the temple. Let your end finger remind you that pursuit of an education is a religious responsibility.<sup>24</sup> Let your thumb go up, reminding you to uphold the standards of the Church and to be worthy of your eternal companion. The realization of these five objectives will bless your lives.

## **Honor and care for your wife**

You bearers of the Melchizedek Priesthood should qualify for the highest degree of celestial glory. “In order to obtain [it], a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage]; And if he does not, he cannot obtain it.”<sup>25</sup>

That covenant is honored when you honor your wife. A husband's foremost priority should be the care of his wife. Be true to her. Don't ever allow your eyes to gaze upon pornography or let your language be lewd. The very choices made by reason of agency limit one's agency in the future. You cannot exercise agency and escape accountability and responsibility for each choice.

## **Use the priesthood righteously**

Never forget that “the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven. . . . [This power] cannot be controlled nor handled [except] upon the principles of righteousness.”<sup>26</sup> If we abuse that power to cover our sins, to gratify our pride, to pursue vain ambition, or to control others in any degree of unrighteousness, we lose both the authority and the power of the priesthood.<sup>27</sup>

Brethren, serve with gentleness, long-suffering, kindness, meekness, love unfeigned, pure knowledge, and charity toward all.<sup>28</sup> Then the “doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon [your] soul as the dews from heaven.”<sup>29</sup>

Please know of our love and gratitude for each of you. We thank you for your faith, your service, and your sustaining strength. May you, your loved ones, and your posterity be blessed by your righteous pursuit of power in the priesthood.

God lives. Jesus is the Christ. He directs His Church through His prophets and apostles. I so testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Ephesians 4:5.
2. See George Albert Smith, *Sharing the Gospel with Others*, comp. Preston Nibley (1948), 144–45.
3. See Matthew 20:16; 22:14; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 17:14; Alma 13:3, 6, 9; 3 Nephi 12:1; Doctrine and Covenants 3:10; 52:1; 95:5; 121:34, 40–46.
4. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38.
5. See Hebrews 13:17; Alma 5:18; 11:43; Doctrine and Covenants 72:13–16.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 135:4.
7. See 3 Nephi 9:20.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 100:5–6.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
10. See Joseph Smith—History 1:72; Doctrine and Covenants 27:8, 12.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:5.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:11.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:6.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:12.
15. See Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 337–38; see also Doctrine and Covenants 27:9; 110:13–16; 128:21.
16. See Matthew 16:19; 18:18; Doctrine and Covenants 124:93; 127:7; 128:8, 10; 132:46.
17. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 3:154–56.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 112:31; see also 128:18.
19. Hebrews 5:4.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 107:3; see also Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 7:3; Alma 13:1.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:20, 38; 84:19–22, 26–27; 107:18–20; 124:39–46; 133:6.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 132:47.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 11:13–14.
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:18–19.
25. Doctrine and Covenants 131:2–3; second brackets are in the original.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 121:36.
27. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:37.
28. See 2 Thessalonians 1:3; Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42.
29. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.

## Elder Monte J. Brough

I hold in my hand a copy of a Sunday School manual titled *Leaders of the Scriptures*, which was printed in 1947. The authors were Marion G. Merkley and Gordon B. Hinckley. Fifty-six years ago! This manual has been in my home for many years and is part of the motivation for this talk.

### Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood

One of the most significant events of the Restoration is that of the Aaronic Priesthood in May 1829. John the Baptist

appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Joseph recounts:

“While we were thus employed, praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us, saying:

“Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.”<sup>1</sup>

We have in this priesthood session of general conference tens of thousands of young men who hold the Aaronic Priesthood and who belong to deacons, teachers, and priests quorums all over the world. Each quorum is headed by a quorum presidency, including a president who holds keys to lead the individual priesthood quorum.

### **Youth can hold responsible positions**

Many of us may consider these youthful leaders to be too young to hold those important, responsible positions. Let us consider a few examples of what youth really can do.

#### *Jeremiah*

First, the prophet Jeremiah:

"Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

"Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

"Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.

"But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. . . .

"Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth."<sup>2</sup>

If the Lord desired, couldn't He also put words in the mouth of a 13-year-old deacons quorum president, who "holds the keys of the ministering of angels"?

#### *Timothy*

Another young man, Timothy, was a missionary companion to the Apostle Paul. The epistles from Paul to Timothy are tributes to the faith and testimony of this very young man. Let me read a few extracts from those epistles:

"Wherefore . . . stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. . . .

"[Christ] hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling."<sup>3</sup>

"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise."<sup>4</sup>

As with Timothy, wouldn't a 14-year-old teachers quorum president be entitled to a "gift of God" when he is set apart by the bishop? Isn't the calling of teachers quorum president also "an holy calling"? Can a 16-year-old priest be "wise"? The scriptures give us a resounding *yes!*

#### *Mormon*

One of the greatest examples of a very young man making a contribution of monumental significance is that of Mormon. Let's read just part of his account:

"And now I, Mormon, make a record of the things which I have both seen and heard, and call it the Book of Mormon.

"And about the time that Ammaron hid up the records unto the Lord, he came unto me, (I being about ten years of age, and I began to be learned somewhat after the manner of the learning of my people) and Ammaron said unto me: I perceive that thou art a sober child, and art quick to observe. . . .

"And behold, [one day] ye shall take the plates of Nephi unto yourself, and the remainder shall ye leave in the place where they are; and ye shall engrave on the plates of Nephi all the things that ye have observed concerning this people."<sup>5</sup>

"And notwithstanding I being young, was large in stature; therefore the people of Nephi appointed me that I should be their leader, or the leader of their armies.

"[And so] it came to pass that in my sixteenth year I did go forth at the head of an army of the Nephites."<sup>6</sup>

What a chronology of events in such a young life! He began preparing for his prophetic calling at age 10, when he re-

ceived knowledge of the ancient sacred records. By appointment of the people of Nephi, he became the head of the Nephite armies at age 16.

### **Visits to an injured quorum member**

In June of the year I was 12 years old, I was injured in a horse accident while delivering newspapers in my old hometown of Randolph, Utah. I was placed in a wheelchair for six months, until I first walked on Christmas Day. I remember the members of my deacons quorum presidency coming to my home to visit me—Dale Rex, Doug McKinnon, and others who were 13-year-old leaders in the deacons quorum presidency. They seemed to understand their responsibility to me as a member of their quorum.

### **Failure to invite a young woman to church**

I recently was standing at the luggage retrieval at the Salt Lake City International Airport when a woman came to me and asked my name. I recognized her as a former South Rich High School classmate from years ago. She had changed since I had last seen her. You all know how you feel at the dreaded high school reunion. She had added some gray hair and a few wrinkles. (Of course, I hadn't changed.) It was obvious that she was meeting her missionary child, who was returning from a mission. It surprised me. While she was yet in school, her family, who were not members of the Church, had moved into our small community. Her name was Alice Gomez. She was about the same age as me and my friends. I remembered that she was friendly and always polite but that she never did attend any of our Church meetings.

I said to her, "Alice, tell me your story. You are obviously now an active member of the Church, but you never joined while we were going to school."

Her answer was condemning: "No one ever asked me!" Wow! Our quorum really dropped the ball on that one.

### **Jamaican quorum helps missionaries**

Recently reported to me was the story of a priests quorum in Jamaica that decided to help the missionaries with their work. So this quorum of young men went knocking on doors, trying to find appointments for the missionaries. They soon found more referrals than the missionaries could handle.

### **Kaysville quorum visits less-active boys**

Members of a priests quorum in Kaysville, Utah, decided they would not lose one member of their quorum. The whole quorum would go to a less-active member's home and have their Sunday lesson sitting around the less-active boy's bed. Soon that young man joined his quorum in taking the Sunday lesson to another home.

### **Rise up to quorum responsibilities**

As of the year 2003, there are more than 26,000 wards and branches in the Church, with approximately 78,000 deacons, teachers, and priests quorums. Talk about an army!

The contribution the quorums of the Aaronic Priesthood could make to the work of converting, retaining, and activating other members of their quorums is enormous.

If 16-year-old Mormon could be the commanding officer of a large military army, and if Jeremiah as a child could have words put in his mouth by the Almighty God, and if Timothy could be wise as he was, then each young man within the sound of my voice can rise to the challenge of his quorum responsibilities.



The responsibilities of the Aaronic Priesthood quorums are no less important than the responsibilities of elders quorums or high priests groups. Remember, they hold “the keys of the ministering of angels.” We need young men to stand up in their calling, knowing of their ordained right to act in the office to which they are appointed.

I testify that these Aaronic Priesthood quorums hold the holy priesthood of God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Joseph Smith—History 1:68–69.
2. Jeremiah 1:4–7, 9.
3. 2 Timothy 1:6, 9.
4. 2 Timothy 3:15.
5. Mormon 1:1–2, 4.
6. Mormon 2:1–2.

## Elder Merrill J. Bateman

### **Priesthood restored by divine messengers**

One of the remarkable evidences of the Restoration is the testimony of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery regarding the manner in which the priesthood and its directing powers were returned to earth. In each case, priesthood and priesthood keys were restored by divine messengers who had held them in earlier times. John the Baptist brought back the Aaronic Priesthood with the keys of repentance and baptism.<sup>1</sup> Peter, James, and John restored not only the Melchizedek Priesthood but also “the keys of [the] kingdom.”<sup>2</sup> Moses and Elijah returned with the “gathering” and “sealing” keys.<sup>3</sup>

The events describing the return of the priesthood are remarkable in that they conform precisely with the biblical pattern of priesthood restoration in earlier dispensations. For example, consider the restoration and transfer of priesthood powers during the Savior’s time.

### **Jesus gives keys to His Apostles**

Near the end of His ministry, Jesus promised Peter “the keys of the kingdom,”<sup>4</sup> knowing that Jesus would soon leave and that priesthood keys were needed by the Apostles if they were to direct the work

after His ascension. In order for them to receive the keys, Matthew records that Jesus took “Peter, James, and John . . . up into an high mountain” where He “was transfigured before them” and Moses and Elias “appeared unto them.”<sup>5</sup> Shortly after this event, the Savior declared that the Apostles now had the keys to direct the ministry.<sup>6</sup> The Prophet Joseph Smith states that “the Savior, Moses, and Elias, gave the keys to Peter, James and John, on the mount, when they were transfigured before him.”<sup>7</sup>

The pattern of priesthood restoration described by Matthew is the same pattern followed in our dispensation. Apostles and prophets designated by the Lord to hold keys in earlier dispensations returned them to earth as this dispensation began.

In contrast, 19th-century ministers in the Palmyra environs, not understanding the great apostasy that had taken place, believed in an entirely different process for priesthood reception. They believed that the power to preach came through an inner calling to a priesthood of believers. They did not understand the necessity of receiving the priesthood from a person in authority by the laying on of hands.<sup>8</sup> Also, they did not understand the purpose or necessity of priesthood keys.

## Priesthood keys

The priesthood is the power and authority of God delegated to man. Priesthood keys are the right to direct the use of that power. The President of the Church holds the keys necessary for governing the entire Church. His counselors in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles also hold the keys of the kingdom and operate under the President's direction. Stake presidents, bishops, and temple, mission, and quorum presidents are given keys to guide the Church in their jurisdictions. Their counselors do not hold keys but "receive delegated authority by calling and assignment."<sup>9</sup>

Priesthood and priesthood keys open the door to the blessings of the Atonement. Through the power of the priesthood, people are baptized for the remission of sins, made possible by the Savior's great act of mercy. A man who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood may confer the Holy Ghost. Through the bestowal of the Holy Ghost, members are cleansed with fire, guided into truth, comforted, sanctified, and blessed in many ways as partakers of the fruits of the Atonement. The sealing authority may bind a man, a woman, and their children together forever, making possible exaltations in the world to come—again, a blessing from the Savior.

## Story of son and priesthood blessings

It is expected that worthy holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood will use the power delegated to them to bless others, starting with their own families. One of the great inheritances of the Restoration is that a father ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood has the right to bless his wife and children when prompted and when a blessing is desired by them.

Many years ago our family had an experience which left an indelible impres-

sion as to the importance and value and power of a father's blessing. The lessons learned may be of interest to you.

### *Son declines a blessing*

When our oldest children were ready to begin formal schooling, Sister Bateman and I decided that a father's blessing would be given to each child at the beginning of the school year. The family home evening preceding the start of school would be the occasion. The year our oldest son, Michael, entered the third grade holds special memories for us. During the preceding summer he had participated in Little League baseball. He loved the sport. When we gathered for family home evening just before the start of school, Michael announced that he did not need a blessing. He had completed his first season in Little League, and blessings were for younger children.

Sister Bateman and I were stunned. We encouraged him, suggesting that a blessing would help him with his schoolwork. It would be a protection to him. It would help him in his relations with his brothers, sisters, and friends. Our encouragement, along with some coaxing, failed. He was too old. Believing in the principle of agency, we were not about to force a blessing on an eight-year-old. All of the children except Michael received a blessing that year.

### *Struck by a car*

The school year proceeded normally. Michael and the other children did well in school, and the family enjoyed their associations together. Then the following May arrived, and it was time for Little League baseball to begin. Following the last day of school, Michael's coach called a team practice. Michael's anticipation could not have been greater. His dream was about to be realized. He was to be the starting catcher.

The baseball diamond was only a few blocks from our home. The boys and the coach walked to the baseball field, crossing a busy highway. Following the practice, the boys and coach started for home. Michael and a friend ran on ahead of the coach and the other boys. As the two boys approached the busy highway, Michael failed to look and darted in front of a car driven by a 16-year-old young man out for his first drive. Can you imagine the fear that must have struck the young man's heart? He slammed on the brakes and swerved in an attempt to miss the boy. Unfortunately, the side of the front fender and bumper hit Michael and threw him down the highway.

A short time later, Sister Bateman and I received a telephone call from the police. Michael, in critical condition, was in an ambulance on his way to the hospital. It was important that we hurry. Before leaving, I called a friend and asked him to meet us at the hospital and assist in giving a blessing. The 20-minute drive was the longest of our lives. We prayed fervently for the life of our son and to know the will of the Lord.

As we parked the car by the door of the emergency room, we saw a policeman exiting with a young man who was crying. The policeman recognized us and introduced the young man as the driver of the car. We knew enough of the story to put our arms around him and tell him that we knew it was not his fault.

### *A priesthood blessing*

We then entered the hospital to find Michael. As we entered his room, the doctors and nurses were working feverishly, attending to his needs. My friend had arrived, and we asked if it would be possible to have two or three minutes alone with him. My priesthood brother anointed, and I sealed. As I laid my hands upon Michael's head, a feeling of comfort and peace came

over me, words flowed, and promises were made. He was then rushed to the operating room.

### *Recovery*

For the next four weeks, Michael lay in a hospital bed with his head bandaged and his leg in traction. Each Wednesday his Little League teammates would visit him after the game and give him a report. Each Wednesday, tears would well up in Michael's eyes and run down his cheeks as the boys relived the game. After four weeks in traction, Michael was put in a body cast from his chest to his toes. On two or three occasions we took him to a game to watch his friends play. Another four weeks passed, and the body cast was replaced with a cast from his hip to his toes. Two days before school was to begin, the final cast was removed. As the family gathered the next night for school blessings, is there any wonder as to who wanted the first blessing? A nine-year-old boy, a little older and a lot wiser, was first in line.

### *A tradition of priesthood blessings*

Over the years our children have come to understand that accidents are not always prevented by priesthood blessings, but they also know that more than one type of protection is available through the priesthood. Today our grandchildren are the recipients of priesthood blessings. The tradition is in the second and third generations. We believe that this practice, like the family, will prevail through the eternities.

I am so grateful that a 14-year-old boy, Joseph Smith, entered a grove of trees asking to know which church is right. I will be eternally grateful for the answer he received and the subsequent restoration of the priesthood and its keys through John the Baptist; Peter, James, and John; and other holy messengers. May we use this great power to bless all of God's children,

beginning with our own families, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 13; Joseph Smith—History 1:68–72.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:12–13.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:11–16.
4. Matthew 16:19.
5. Matthew 17:1–3.
6. See Matthew 18:18; Doctrine and Covenants 7:7.
7. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 158.
8. See Milton V. Backman Jr., *Christian Churches of America: Origins and Beliefs*, rev. ed. (1976, 1983), 54–55.

9. *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders* (1998), 161.

#### President Hinckley

Thank you, brethren.

We shall now hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. The choir and congregation will then sing “Redeemer of Israel.” President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then speak to us.

## President James E. Faust

### Young orphan girl crossing the plains

My dear brethren of the priesthood of God all over the world, we extend to each of you our love and greetings wherever you are.

Picture with me a little six-year-old orphan girl traveling across the plains of America. Her name is Elsie Ann. Her mother died when she was two. Her father remarried, and so for a time she had a stepmother. Then her father died at Winter Quarters when she was five. Her stepmother remarried and moved away, leaving this little orphan behind with Peter and Selina Robison, who were related to her stepmother. Elsie Ann left Winter Quarters with the Robisons in July of 1849 to come west. As she watched Selina care for her 10-month-old baby girl, she no doubt ached for the love of her own mother. Sometimes she would even ask, “Where is my mother?”

My heart goes out to this little girl when I think of her facing her uncertain future with no blood relatives to comfort

and help her. Elsie Ann was my great-grandmother, and only recently did we find out who her mother really was. For years we thought Elsie Ann was Jane Robison’s daughter. Careful research discovered her true parentage, and after all these years Elsie Ann now has been sealed to her father, John Akerley, and her mother, Mary Moore.

My grandparents have had a great influence on my life. Even though they have been dead for many years, I still feel their confirming love. One grandfather, James Akerley Faust, died before I was born. I knew him only through the stories my grandmother and my parents told about him. However, I feel a strong kinship with him because I am in part what he was. Among other things, he was a cowboy, a rancher, and a postmaster in a small town in central Utah. On one occasion, Grandfather took a trip in the winter to Idaho, where he met an acquaintance who had fallen on hard times. It was cold, and Grandfather’s friend had no coat. Grandfather took off his coat and gave it to him.

### **A hunger to know our heritage**

This evening I encourage you young men to begin to unlock the knowledge of who you really are by learning more about your forebears. Alex Haley, the author of the book *Roots*, said:

“In all of us there is a hunger, marrow-deep, to know our heritage—to know who we are and where we have come from. Without this enriching knowledge, there is a hollow yearning. No matter what our attainments in life, there is still a vacuum, an emptiness, and the most disquieting loneliness.”<sup>1</sup>

We can have exciting experiences as we learn about our vibrant, dynamic ancestors. They were very real, living people with problems, hopes, and dreams like we have today.

In many ways each of us is the sum total of what our ancestors were. The virtues they had may be our virtues, their strengths our strengths, and in a way their challenges could be our challenges. Some of their traits may be our traits. I noticed a while ago that one of my great-grandsons, a toddler, seemed to have an interesting kind of a walk. My wife said, “He walks just like you do!” Now I wonder from whom I inherited this characteristic.

It is a joy to become acquainted with our forebears who died long ago. Each of us has a fascinating family history. Finding your ancestors can be one of the most interesting puzzles you young men can work on.

### **Learn about the phenomenon that is you**

Each of us has to begin this work somewhere, and it can be done by young or old. This summer 170 children of the Accra Ghana Lartebikorshie Stake worked on their four-generation family trees during a two-hour program, with more than 74 completing and displaying their trees.

As President Boyd K. Packer has said, “If you don’t know where to start, start with *yourself*. If you don’t know what records to get, and how to get them, start with what you have.”<sup>2</sup> You will learn about the phenomenon that is you. It can be more fascinating than any movie you might see or any computer game you might play. You will need to find out who your grandparents and great-grandparents were and what temple work has been done for them. If you don’t know how to get this information, ask people in your ward who do know how.

Ask living members of your family what they know about your extended family. Look at records that are close at hand, such as family Bibles, to find more details about your forebears. Then you can reach out to other sources such as vital records, church records, census records, and military records. If you have access to a computer, you can put your computer skills to work and log on to the Church’s FamilySearch.org Web site. Family history has become a sophisticated activity where computers provide immense resources for your search. You can easily access a vast collection of family history records using the Internet on your home computer or at your nearest family history center.

Family history centers are now available in 88 countries. They are part of an unequaled record-keeping system that helps preserve the heritage of families all over the world. In the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, patrons are constantly corresponding and submitting information about their family histories. One person wrote, “We are sending you five children in a separate envelope.”

### **A responsibility, not just a hobby**

The great work of providing the saving ordinances for our kindred dead is a vital part of the threefold mission of the

Church. We do this work for a purpose, which is to redeem our dead ancestors. Temple work is essential for both us and our kindred dead who are waiting for these saving ordinances to be done for them. It is essential because “we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect.”<sup>3</sup> They need the saving ordinances, and we need to be sealed to them. For this reason it is important that we trace our family lines so that no one is left out.

Searching for our kindred dead isn’t just a hobby. It is a fundamental responsibility for all members of the Church. We believe that life continues after death and that all will be resurrected.<sup>4</sup> We believe that families may continue in the next life if they have kept the special covenants made in one of the sacred temples under the authority of God. We believe that our deceased ancestors can also be eternally united with their families when we make covenants in their behalf in the temples. Our deceased forebears may accept these covenants, if they choose to do so, in the spirit world.<sup>5</sup>

### **Forge a continuous chain with forefathers**

The great vicarious work for our kindred dead in our temples demonstrates both the justice and the fairness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained the terrible dilemma which would face God’s children without temple work for our dead. Said he:

“One dies and is buried, having never heard the Gospel of reconciliation; to the other the message of salvation is sent, he hears and embraces it, and is made the heir of eternal life. Shall the one become the partaker of glory and the other be consigned to hopeless perdition? Is there no chance for his escape?”<sup>6</sup>

Fortunately our ancestors will have the opportunity to receive and accept the saving ordinances as we identify them and complete these sacred ordinances for

them by proxy. We do for them what they cannot do for themselves. It is a very satisfying experience.

In the great vision in the Kirtland Temple, Elijah the prophet appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and committed the keys of temple work and the sealing power into Joseph Smith’s hands.<sup>7</sup> This fulfilled Malachi’s prophecy that Elijah would be sent “to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse.”<sup>8</sup>

So what does this mean? To turn our hearts to our fathers is to search out the names of our deceased ancestors and to perform the saving ordinances in the temple for them. This will forge a continuous chain between us and our forefathers eventually all the way back to Father Adam and Mother Eve.

### **Young boy helps find an ancestor**

The heart of an 11-year-old boy was turned to his fathers during a family home evening when the children assembled personal books of remembrance. Young Jeff wanted to accompany his mother to the National Archives. She was afraid that he might disturb the other researchers there. But he persisted, and she relented and took him with her. Four hours into their research, he exclaimed, “Mama, I’ve found Grandpa!” Indeed, he had found his great-great-great-grandfather.<sup>9</sup> However, it doesn’t always work that way. In a letter to the Family History Department, someone wrote, “We lost our grandmother. Will you please send us a copy?”

The gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us that the celestial family organization will be “one that is *complete*,” that is, “an organization linked from father and mother and children of one generation, to the father and mother and children of the next generation, thus expanding and spreading out down to the end of time.”<sup>10</sup>

### Student experiences a miracle in research

In tracing our family names, we often find them spelled differently, depending on the source. This was the case of a university student in Provo, Utah, who caught the vision of this linking of generations. He was walking through the library one evening and remembered hearing someone in the Searing family tell about a town in New York State that had been named after an ancestor. So he decided to look up the town. He stumbled across a very old copy of a gazetteer of New York and read about a man named Simon Searing who helped settle Long Island in the mid-1600s. Could Simon be his ancestor? He had to know. He began research in earnest and traced his line back several generations. But still he needed to bridge the gap between the 1800s and the 1600s. Then a miracle occurred. He unexpectedly located a history of a *Syring* family. The families in the *Syring* book ended in the same generation he had reached in his own research. Not only was he able to connect many generations, but he also linked himself to the early settler Simon Searing.<sup>11</sup>

### “Ordinary” people have heroic lives

Some who are interested in family history try to enhance their own image by linking up with prominent people. In my own experience it has been quite different. I have been fascinated by learning of some of the unknown, ordinary people whose records tell of heroic lives. Arthur R. Bassett once said:

“Who among us wants to throw stones at their own ancestors? I, for one, am intrigued by their battles—their victories as well as their defeats. . . . I am fascinated by what may seem the most commonplace of lives, because I have come to realize the excitement that is concealed in the commonplace.”<sup>12</sup>

It is not likely that you will find any horse thieves in your ancestral line. But if

you do, it is important that their temple work be done because we believe in repentance for the dead also:

“The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God,

“And after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, shall receive a reward according to their works, for they are heirs of salvation.”<sup>13</sup>

### Rewards of family history work

The process of finding our ancestors one by one can be challenging but also exciting and rewarding. We often feel spiritual guidance as we go to the sources that identify them. Because this is a very spiritual work, we can expect help from the other side of the veil. We feel a pull from our relatives who are waiting for us to find them so their ordinance work can be done. This is a Christlike service because we are doing something for them that they cannot do for themselves.

Many of you young men have already had a taste of temple work as you have participated in baptisms for the dead. When we go early to the temple, we often see young people dressed in white, ready to take part in this satisfying experience before going to school. You are to be commended for your dedication in performing this vital work. In so doing you have already felt the peace and serenity found within the walls of our temples.

I testify that God is a just God, and He will not give privileges to us and withhold them from our forebears. But we will need to do the baptisms, the endowments, and the sealings for them by proxy here on earth in order for us and them to be linked together for eternity “and have part in the first resurrection.”<sup>14</sup>

I further testify that the Lord directs and inspires President Hinckley as he leads us in this important work. May the peace that comes from faithful discharge of our

priesthood duties ever be with us, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. "What *Roots* Means to Me," *Reader's Digest*, May 1977, 73–74.
2. "Your Family History: Getting Started," *Ensign*, Aug. 2003, 15.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
4. See Acts 24:15; Alma 11:41–45.
5. See "Why Family History?" Internet, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org).
6. *History of the Church*, 4:425–26.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:13–14, 16.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:14–15.
9. R. Scott Lloyd, "Hearts of the Children," *Church News*, 14 Sept. 1986, 16.
10. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 2:175.
11. Bryan Searing, "The Link Made," *Church News*, 27 Oct. 1990, 16.
12. "The Relationship of Genealogy and History," in Proceedings of the 1980 World Conference on Records, 13 vols., Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2:4.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 138:58–59.
14. Wilford Woodruff, *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 149.

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The choir and congregation sang  
"Redeemer of Israel."

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## President Thomas S. Monson

### Priesthood—the perfect plan of service

My dear brethren, it is a humbling experience to stand before you this evening and to realize that beyond the imposing audience in this, the Conference Center, many hundreds of thousands of priesthood bearers are similarly assembled throughout the world.

While contemplating the responsibility to speak to you, I recalled a definition of priesthood authority declared by President Stephen L. Richards. Said he:

"The Priesthood is usually simply defined as 'the power of God delegated to man.' This definition, I think, is accurate. But for practical purposes I like to define the Priesthood in terms of service and I frequently call it 'the perfect plan of service.'" <sup>1</sup>

Whether we hold the office of a deacon in the Aaronic Priesthood or that of an elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood, we are duty bound by the Lord's revelation found in the 107th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 99: "Wherefore, now

let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence."

### A great blessing to hold the priesthood

As our youngest son, Clark, was approaching his 12th birthday, he and I were leaving the Church Administration Building when President Harold B. Lee approached and greeted us. I mentioned that Clark would soon be 12, whereupon President Lee turned to him and asked, "What happens to you when you turn 12?"

This was one of those times when a father prays that a son will be inspired to give a proper response. Clark, without hesitation, said to President Lee, "I will be ordained a deacon!"

The answer was the one President Lee had sought. He then counseled our son, "Remember, it is a great blessing to hold the priesthood."

When I was a boy, I looked forward to passing the sacrament to the ward members. We deacons were trained as to our



duties. One of the men in our ward, Louis, suffered from palsy. His head and hands shook so violently that he could not, by himself, partake of the sacrament. Each deacon knew that his duty in serving Louis was to hold the bread to his lips so that he might partake and to similarly place the cup of water to his mouth with one hand, while steadying his head with the other, the tray being held by another deacon while doing so. Always Louis would say, "Thank you."

### **Experience as a newly called Apostle**

It was 40 years ago this conference time when President David O. McKay called me to serve as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. At the first meeting of the Presidency and Twelve which I attended where the sacrament was served, President McKay announced, "Before we partake of the sacrament, I would like to ask our newest member of this body, Brother Monson, if he would instruct the First Presidency and Twelve on the atoning sacrifice of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." It was then that I gained a true understanding of the old adage: "When the time for decision arrives, the time for preparation is past." It was also the time to remember the counsel found in 1 Peter: "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you."<sup>2</sup>

I began my remarks by referring to a letter which I had received from one of the servicemen from our ward who was serving on the front lines in Korea during that sometimes forgotten war. The writer told how, amidst the shelling on Sunday morning, several in his platoon partook of the bread and then the water, both served from a helmet. Each remembered the significance of the blessing pronounced on the sacred emblems and his individual responsibility to keep the commandments of the Lord and to follow the Lord's example of service to others.

The memory of that particular experience with the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve has not dimmed in the intervening 40 years.

To those who have been absent from home and family, whether in the military, on missions, or for other purposes, the holiday season brings forth a yearning—even a longing—to be together with loved ones. To hear the laughter of children, to witness the expression of love by parents, and to feel the embrace of brothers and sisters provide a preview of heaven and the eternal joy to be found there.

### **Nothing can take the place of the home**

One December evening, while waiting to board a plane en route to the United States, Sister Monson and I were standing in the stifling heat and humidity of Singapore, when over the airport loudspeaker system came a familiar, lilting melody, with Bing Crosby singing the words:

I'll be home for Christmas;  
You can plan on me.  
Please have snow and mistletoe  
And presents on the tree.  
Christmas Eve will find me  
Where the love-light gleams.  
I'll be home for Christmas  
If only in my dreams.<sup>3</sup>

The First Presidency has long emphasized the statement, "The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions."<sup>4</sup>

### **A father repents and rescues his son**

There are those families comprised of mothers and fathers, sons and daughters who have, through thoughtless comment, isolated themselves from one another. An account of how such a tragedy was narrowly averted occurred many years ago in the life of a young man who, for purposes of privacy, I shall call Jack.

Throughout Jack's life, he and his father had many serious arguments. One day when he was 17, they had a particularly violent one. Jack said to his father, "This is the straw that breaks the camel's back. I'm leaving home, and I shall never return." So saying, he went to the house and packed his bag. His mother begged him to stay; he was too angry to listen. He left her crying at the doorway.

Leaving the yard, he was about to pass through the gate when he heard his father call to him, "Jack, I know that a large share of the blame for your leaving rests with me. For this I am truly sorry. I want you to know that if you should ever wish to return home, you'll always be welcome. And I'll try to be a better father to you. I want you to know that I'll always love you."

Jack said nothing but went to the bus station and bought a ticket to a distant point. As he sat on the bus, watching the miles go by, he commenced to think about the words of his father. He began to realize how much love it had required for him to do what he had done. Dad had apologized. He had invited him back and left the words ringing in the summer air: "I love you."

It was then that Jack realized that the next move was up to him. He knew the only way he could ever find peace with himself was to demonstrate to his father the same kind of maturity, goodness, and love that Dad had shown toward him. Jack got off the bus. He bought a return ticket and went back.

He arrived shortly after midnight, entered the house, turned on the light. There in the rocking chair sat his father, his head in his hands. As he looked up and saw Jack, he arose from the chair and they rushed into each other's arms. Jack often said, "Those last years that I was home were among the happiest of my life."

We could say that here was a boy who overnight became a man. Here was a fa-

ther who, suppressing passion and bridling pride, rescued his son before he became one of that vast "lost battalion" resulting from fractured families and shattered homes. Love was the binding band, the healing balm. Love so often felt, so seldom expressed.

### **Reach out and rescue those who stray**

From Mount Sinai there thunders in our ears, "Honour thy father and thy mother."<sup>5</sup> And later from the Lord the injunction, "Live together in love."<sup>6</sup>

Brethren, ours is the responsibility, yes, even the solemn duty, to reach out to those who have slipped into inactivity or strayed from the family circle.

Recall with me the beautiful words of the Lord's revelation from section 18 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God. . . .

"And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

"And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!"<sup>7</sup>

As presidencies of Aaronic Priesthood quorums, as advisers to these quorums, we can, with the Lord's help, reach out and rescue those for whom we have responsibility. Young men, with a smile on your face and determination in your heart, you can take, arm in arm, a less-active boy and together come to priesthood meeting and learn of the Lord and what He has prepared for you to do. You are entitled to His divine help, for He has promised you: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."<sup>8</sup>

Brethren of the Melchizedek Priesthood, you have the same sacred charge and obligation as pertains to your duties to other men and to their families. And you have the same promise of the Lord to attend your efforts.

As you succeed, you will be answering a mother's prayer, the tender though unexpressed feelings of children's hearts; and your names will forever be honored by those whom you reach out and help.

### **A prompting to reach out as a bishop**

Let me share with you a rather private but joyful example from my own experience.

As a bishop I worried about any members who were inactive, not attending, not serving. Such was my thought one day as I drove down the street where Ben and Emily Fullmer lived. Aches and pains of advancing years caused them to withdraw from activity to the shelter of their home—isolated, detached, shut out from the mainstream of daily life and association. Ben and Emily had not been in our sacrament meeting for many years. Ben, a former bishop, would sit constantly in his front room reading and memorizing the New Testament.

I was en route from my uptown sales office to our plant on Industrial Road. For some reason I had driven down First West, a street which I never had traveled before to reach the destination of our plant. Then I felt the unmistakable prompting to park my car and visit Ben and Emily, even though I was on my way to a meeting. I did not heed the impression at first but drove on for two more blocks; however, when the impression came again, I returned to their home.

It was a sunny weekday afternoon. I approached the door to their home and knocked. I heard the tiny fox terrier dog bark at my approach. Emily welcomed me in. Upon seeing me, she exclaimed, "All

day long I have waited for my phone to ring. It has been silent. I hoped the postman would deliver a letter. He brought only bills. Bishop, how did you know today is my birthday?"

I answered, "God knows, Emily, for He loves you."

In the quiet of their living room, I said to Ben and Emily, "I really don't know why I was directed here today, but I was. Our Heavenly Father knows. Let's kneel in prayer and ask Him why." This we did, and the answer came. As we arose from our knees, I said to Brother Fullmer, "Ben, would you come to priesthood meeting when we meet with all the priesthood and relate to our Aaronic Priesthood boys the story you once told me when I was a boy, how you and a group of boys were en route to the Jordan River to swim one Sunday, but you felt the Spirit direct you to attend Sunday School. And you did. One of the boys who failed to respond to that Spirit drowned that Sunday. Our boys would like to hear your testimony."

"I'll do it," he responded.

I then said to Sister Fullmer, "Emily, I know you have a beautiful voice. My mother has told me so. Our ward conference is a few weeks away, and our choir will sing. Would you join the choir and attend our ward conference and perhaps sing a solo?"

"What will the number be?" she inquired.

"I don't know," I said, "but I'd like you to sing it." (That's what drives choristers crazy, brethren.)

She sang. He spoke to the Aaronic Priesthood. Hearts were gladdened by the return to activity of Ben and Emily. They rarely missed a sacrament meeting from that day forward. The language of the Spirit had been spoken. It had been heard. It had been understood. Hearts were touched and souls saved. Ben and Emily Fullmer had come home.

## Bring him home

One of the longest-running musicals in history is *Les Misérables*. The story is set in the period of the French Revolution. The principal character in the musical is Jean Valjean. In his heartfelt concern for the young man Marius, who is going off to battle, he expresses in song a sincere prayer:

God on high,  
Hear my prayer;  
In my need  
You have always been there.

He is young,  
He's afraid;  
Let him rest,  
Heaven blessed.  
Bring him home. . . .

Bring him peace,  
Bring him joy.  
He is young;  
He is only a boy.

You can take,  
You can give;  
Let him be,  
Let him live.  
If I die, let me die,  
Let him live.  
Bring him home.<sup>9</sup>

Brethren, as we go forward as bearers of the priesthood of God, learning our duty and then reaching out to our brethren who stand in need of our help, let us look upward to our Heavenly Father, who is the Father of us all. We may not hear His voice, but we will remember His salutation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."<sup>10</sup>

And within our hearts we will recognize His unspoken plea: *Bring him home*. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1937, 46.
2. 1 Peter 3:15.
3. Kim Gannon and Walter Kent, "I'll Be Home for Christmas," 1943.
4. First Presidency letter, Feb. 11, 1999; quoted in *Ensign*, June 1999, 80; see also J. Reuben Clark Jr., meeting of general Church auxiliary executives, Mar. 29, 1940.
5. Exodus 20:12.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 42:45.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10, 15–16.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
9. Herbert Kretzmer, "Bring Him Home."
10. Matthew 25:21.

## President Hinckley

My dear brethren, we've had a wonderful meeting. We're grateful to all who participated in any way—to those who have spoken and touched our hearts, to this wonderful priesthood choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center. I don't know where in all the world you'd get a group of young men such as these who have sung to us tonight. Thank you very much, Brother Branchley and those you've directed.

We remind all of you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 in the morning. The Sunday morning session will follow immediately at 10:00 A.M.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to be careful, to obey traffic rules, and to use caution and courtesy in your driving.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing "Praise to the Man Who Communed with Jehovah." The benediction will then be given by Elder H. Ross Workman of the Seventy.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### The shepherds of Israel

Brethren, tonight I am going to do something a little unusual. I am going to repeat some elements of a talk which I gave 15 years ago in our general priesthood meeting. I am going to speak of and to the bishops of the Church, this wonderful body of men who are in a very real sense the shepherds of Israel.

Everyone who participates in this conference is accountable to a bishop or a branch president. Tremendous are the burdens which they carry, and I invite every member of the Church to do all that he or she can to lift the burden under which our bishops and branch presidents labor.

We must pray for them. They need help as they carry their heavy loads. We can be more supportive and less dependent upon them. We can assist them in every way possible. We can thank them for all that they do for us. We are wearing them out in a short time by the burdens which we impose upon them.

We have more than 18,000 bishops in the Church. Every one is a man who has been called by the spirit of prophecy and revelation and set apart and ordained by the laying on of hands. Every one of them holds the keys of the presidency of his ward. Each is a high priest, the presiding high priest of his ward. Each carries tremendous responsibilities of stewardship. Each stands as a father to his people.

None receives money for his service. No ward bishop is compensated by the Church for his work as a bishop.

### Requirements of a bishop

The requirements of a bishop today are as they were in the days of Paul, who wrote to Timothy:

“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of

good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

“Not given to wine, no striker [that is, not a bully or a violent person], . . . not a brawler, not covetous;

“One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

“(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

“Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Timothy 3:2–6).

In his letter to Titus, Paul adds that “a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; . . . holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (Titus 1:7, 9).

Those words aptly describe a bishop today in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

### Men of integrity and moral strength

Let me now speak directly to the thousands of bishops who are in attendance tonight. Let me say first that I love you for your integrity and goodness. You must be men of integrity. You must stand as examples to the congregations over which you preside. You must stand on higher ground so that you can lift others. You must be absolutely honest, for you handle the funds of the Lord, the tithes of the people, the offerings that come of their fasting, and the contributions which they make from their own strained resources. How great is your trust as the keepers of the purse of the Lord!

Your goodness must be as an ensign to your people. Your morals must be impeccable. The wiles of the adversary may be held before you because he knows that if he can destroy you, he can injure an

entire ward. You must exercise wisdom in all of your relationships lest someone read into your observed actions some taint of moral sin. You cannot succumb to the temptation to read pornographic literature or even in the secrecy of your own chamber to view pornographic films. Your moral strength must be such that if ever you are called on to sit in judgment on the questionable morals of others, you may do so without personal compromise or embarrassment.

You cannot use your office as bishop to further your own business interests lest through some ensuing financial mishap accusation be placed against you by those who succumbed to your persuasiveness.

### **A common judge in Israel**

You cannot compromise your qualifications to sit as a common judge in Israel. It is a fearsome and awesome responsibility to stand as a judge of the people. You must be their judge in some instances as to worthiness to hold membership in the Church, worthiness to enter the house of the Lord, worthiness to be baptized, worthiness to receive the priesthood, worthiness to serve missions, worthiness to teach and to serve as officers in the organizations. You must be the judge of their eligibility in times of distress to receive help from the fast offerings of the people and commodities from the storehouse of the Lord. None for whom you are responsible must go hungry or without clothing or shelter though they be reluctant to ask. You must know something of the circumstances of all of the flock over whom you preside.

### **A strength in times of trouble**

You must be their counselor, their comforter, their anchor and strength in times of sorrow and trouble. You must be strong with that strength which comes from the Lord. You must be wise with

that wisdom which comes from the Lord. Your door must be open to hear their cries and your back strong to carry their burdens, your heart sensitive to judge their needs, your godly love broad enough and strong enough to encompass even the wrongdoer and the critic. You must be a man of patience, willing to listen and striving to understand. You are the only one to whom some can turn. You must be there when every other source has failed. Permit me to read you a few lines from a letter sent to a bishop.

“Dear Bishop:

“It has been almost two years since I desperately called you asking for help. At that time I was ready to kill myself. I had no one else to turn to—no money, no job, no friends. My house had been taken, and I had no place to live. The Church was my last hope.

“As you know, I had left the Church at the age of 17 and had broken just about every rule and commandment that there was in my search for happiness and fulfillment. Instead of happiness, my life was filled with misery, anguish, and despair. There was no hope or future for me. I even pleaded with God to let me die, to take me out of my misery. Not even He wanted me. I felt that He had rejected me too.

“That’s when I turned to you and the Church. . . .

“You listened with understanding, you counseled, you guided, you helped.

“I began to grow and develop in understanding and knowledge of the gospel. I found that I had to make certain basic changes in my life that were terribly difficult, but that within me I had the worth and strength to do so.

“I learned that as I lived the gospel and repented, I had no more fear. I was filled with an inner peace. The clouds of anguish and despair were gone. Because of the Atonement, my weaknesses and sins were forgiven through Jesus Christ and His love for me.

“He has blessed and strengthened me. He has opened pathways for me, given me direction, and kept me from harm. I have found that as I overcame each obstacle, my business began to grow, enabling my family to benefit and making me feel as though I had accomplished something.

“Bishop, you have given me understanding and support through these past two years. I never would have reached this point if not for your love and patience. Thank you for being what you are as the servant of the Lord to help me, His wandering child.”

### **A watchman on the tower**

Bishops, you stand as watchmen on the tower of the wards over which you preside. There are many teachers in each ward. But you must be the chief teacher among them. You must see that there is no false doctrine creeping in among the people. You must see that they grow in faith and testimony, in integrity and righteousness and a sense of service. You must see that their love for the Lord strengthens and manifests itself in greater love for one another.

You must be their confessor, privy to their deepest secrets, holding absolutely inviolate the confidences placed in you. Yours is a privileged communication that must be guarded and respected against all intruders. There may be temptations to tell. You cannot succumb.

Unless specifically mandated by legal requirement in cases of abuse, what is told to you in confidence must remain with you. The Church maintains a hotline which you should call concerning cases of abuse which may come to you.

### **The presiding high priest**

You as an individual preside over the Aaronic Priesthood of the ward. You are their leader, their teacher, their example, whether you wish to be or not. You are the

presiding high priest, the father to the ward family, to be called upon as arbiter in disagreements, as defender of the accused.

You preside in meetings where the doctrine is taught. You are accountable for the spiritual nature of those meetings and for the administration of the sacrament to the members, that all may be reminded of sacred covenants and obligations incumbent upon those who have taken upon them the name of the Lord.

You must stand as the strong friend of the widow and the orphan, the weak and the beleaguered, the attacked and the helpless.

The sound of your trumpet must be certain and unequivocal. In your ward you stand as the head of the army of the Lord, leading them on to victory in the conquest against sin, indifference, and apostasy.

### **Wisdom and strength beyond your own**

I know that the work is hard at times. There are never enough hours to get it done. The calls are numerous and frequent. You have other things to do. That is true. You must not rob your employer of the time and energy that are rightfully his. You must not rob your family of time which belongs to them. But as most of you have come to know, as you seek for divine guidance, you are blessed with wisdom beyond your own and strength and capacity you did not know you had. It is possible to budget your time so that you neglect neither your employer, your family, nor your flock.

### **The sweetest, most rewarding service**

God bless the good bishops of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You may on occasion be inclined to complain about the burdens of your office. But you also know the joys of your service. Heavy as the load may be, you know this is the sweetest, the most rewarding, the

most important thing you have ever done outside the walls of your own home.

I thank the Lord for you. I thank the Lord for the good bishops in this Church throughout the world. I pray for you—all 18,000 of you. I plead with you to be strong. I plead with you to be true. I plead with you to be uncompromising in your own lives and in the goals you set for others. Though your days be long and wearisome, may your rest be sweet and in your hearts may you know that peace which comes alone from God to those who serve Him.

I bear testimony of the strength and goodness of the bishops of this Church. I pay tribute to counselors who help them and to all who serve under their direction in response to the calls they make.

We do not expect the impossible from you. We ask that you do the very best you can. Delegate to others every aspect of the work that you legitimately can. And then leave matters in the hands of the Lord.

Someday you will be released. It will be a time of sadness for you. But there will be comfort as your people thank you. Nor will they ever forget you. They will remember you and speak with appreciation through years to come, for among all Church officers you are nearest to them. You have been called, ordained, and set apart as shepherds to the flock. You have been endowed with discernment, judgment, and love to bless their lives. In the process, you will bless your own.

I bear testimony of the divine nature of your calling and of the magnificent way in which you fulfill it. May you, your counselors, your wives, and your children be blessed as you serve the children of the Lord, I humbly pray, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Praise to the Man."

Elder H. Ross Workman offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 173rd Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 5, 2003. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist. The choir sang "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah" to begin the session. President Faust then made the following remarks.

### **President James E. Faust**

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this fourth general session of the 173rd Semiannual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating via radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are making the proceedings of this conference available to many areas across the world.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah" and will now favor us with "Sabbath Day." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Angel Abrea, who yesterday received emeritus status.



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The choir sang “Sabbath Day.”  
Elder Angel Abrea offered the invocation.

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### President Faust

The choir will now sing “I Feel My Savior’s Love.” We shall then hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Coun-

selor in the First Presidency. He will be followed by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which we shall hear from Elder Charles Didier of the Presidency of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “I Feel My Savior’s Love.”

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## President Thomas S. Monson

### The bridge builder

Many years ago I read a book entitled *The Way to the Western Sea*, by David S. Lavender. It provides a fascinating account of the epic journey of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark as they led their famed expedition across the North American continent to discover an overland route to the Pacific Ocean.

Their trek was a nightmare of back-breaking toil, deep gorges which had to be crossed, and extensive travel by foot, carrying with them their supply-laden boats to find the next stream on which to make their way.

As I read of their experiences, I frequently mused, “If only there were modern bridges to span the gorges of the raging waters.” There came to my mind thoughts of magnificent bridges of our time which accomplish this task with ease: the beautiful Golden Gate Bridge of San Francisco fame; the sturdy Sydney, Australia, Harbour Bridge; and others in many lands.

In reality, we are all travelers—even explorers of mortality. We do not have the benefit of previous personal experience. We must pass over steep precipices and turbulent waters in our own journey here on earth.

Perhaps such a somber thought inspired the poet Will Allen Dromgoole’s classic poem titled “The Bridge Builder.”

An old man, going a lone highway,  
Came at the evening, cold and gray,  
To a chasm, vast and deep and wide,  
Through which was flowing a sullen  
tide.

The old man crossed in the twilight  
dim;

The sullen stream had no fears for  
him;

But he turned when safe on the other  
side

And built a bridge to span the tide.

“Old man,” said a fellow pilgrim near,  
“You are wasting strength with build-  
ing here;

Your journey will end with the ending  
day;

You never again must pass this way;  
You have crossed the chasm, deep and  
wide—

Why build you the bridge at the even-  
tide?”

The builder lifted his old gray head:

“Good friend, in the path I have  
come,” he said,

“There followeth after me today

A youth whose feet must pass this way.  
This chasm that has been naught to me  
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall  
be.

He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;  
Good friend, I am building the bridge  
for him.”<sup>1</sup>

## The Savior is the supreme bridge builder

The message of that poem has prompted my thinking and comforted my soul, for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, was the supreme architect and builder of bridges for you, for me, for all mankind. He has built the bridges over which we must cross if we are to reach our heavenly home.

The Savior's mission was foretold. Matthew recorded, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins."<sup>2</sup>

There followed the miracle of His birth and the gathering of the shepherds who came with haste to that stable, to that mother, to that child. Even the Wise Men, journeying from the East, followed that star and bestowed their precious gifts upon the young child.

The scripture records that Jesus "grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him"<sup>3</sup> and that He "went about doing good."<sup>4</sup>

What personal bridges did He build and cross here in mortality, showing us the way to follow? He knew mortality would be filled with dangers and difficulties. He declared:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."<sup>5</sup>

## The bridge of obedience

Jesus provided the *bridge of obedience*. He was an unfailing example of personal obedience as He kept the commandments of His Father.

When He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of Satan, He was weak from fasting. Satan was at his seduc-

tive best in the offerings he proffered. His first was to satisfy the Savior's physical needs, including His hunger. To this the Savior replied, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."<sup>6</sup>

Next Satan offered power. Responded the Savior, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."<sup>7</sup>

Finally the Savior was offered wealth and earthly glory. His response: "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."<sup>8</sup>

The Apostle Paul was inspired of the Lord to declare for our time, as well as for his: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."<sup>9</sup>

Lest we equivocate, I mention a comment from ABC *Nightline*'s Ted Koppel: "What Moses brought down from Mt. Sinai were not the Ten Suggestions [but the Ten] Commandments!"<sup>10</sup>

A bit of subtle humor is found in an account of a conversation between Mark Twain and a friend. Said the wealthy friend to Twain, "Before I die, I mean to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. I will climb to the top of Mount Sinai and read the Ten Commandments aloud."

Replied Twain, "Why don't you stay home and keep them!"

## The bridge of service

The second bridge provided by the Master for us to cross is the *bridge of service*. We look to the Savior as our example of service. Although He came to earth as the Son of God, He humbly served those around Him. He came forth from heaven to live on earth as mortal man and to establish the kingdom of God. His glorious gospel reshaped the thinking of the world. He blessed the sick; He caused the lame

to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear. He even raised the dead to life.

In the 25th chapter of the book of Matthew, the Savior tells us this concerning the faithful who will be on His right hand at His triumphal return:

“Then shall the King say unto them . . . , Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

“Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

“Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

“When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

“Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”<sup>11</sup>

Elder Richard L. Evans once counseled, “We can’t do everything for everyone everywhere, but we can do something for someone somewhere.”<sup>12</sup>

May I share with you an account of an opportunity of service which came to me unexpectedly and in an unusual manner. I received a telephone call from a granddaughter of an old friend. She asked, “Do you remember Francis Brems, who was your Sunday School teacher?” I told her I did. She continued, “He is now 105 years of age. He lives in a small care center but meets with the entire family each Sunday, where he delivers a Sunday School lesson. Last Sunday, Grandpa announced to us, ‘My dears, I am going to die this week. Will you please call Tommy Monson and tell him this. He’ll know what to do.’”

I visited Brother Brems the very next evening. I could not speak to him, for he was deaf. I could not write a message for him to read, for he was blind. What was I to do? I was told that his family communicated with him by taking the finger of his right hand and then tracing on the palm of his left hand the name of the person visiting and then any message. I followed the procedure and took his finger and spelled on the palm of his hand T-O-M-M-Y M-O-N-S-O-N. Brother Brems became excited and, taking my hands, placed them on his head. I knew his desire was to receive a priesthood blessing. The driver who had taken me to the care center joined me as we placed our hands on the head of Brother Brems and provided the desired blessing. Afterward, tears streamed from his sightless eyes. He grasped our hands, and we read the movement of his lips. The message: “Thank you so much.”

Within that very week, just as Brother Brems had predicted, he passed away. I received the telephone call and then met with the family as funeral arrangements were made. How thankful I am that a response to render service was not delayed.

The bridge of service invites us to cross over it frequently.

### **The bridge of prayer**

Finally, the Lord provided us the *bridge of prayer*. He directed, “Pray always, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you, and great shall be your blessing.”<sup>13</sup>

I share with you an account described in a mother’s letter to me relating to prayer. She wrote:

“Sometimes I wonder if I make a difference in my children’s lives. Especially as a single mother working two jobs to make ends meet, I sometimes come home to confusion, but I never give up hope.

“My children and I were watching a television broadcast of general conference, and you were speaking about prayer. My

son made the statement, ‘Mother, you’ve already taught us that.’ I said, ‘What do you mean?’ And he replied, ‘Well, you’ve taught us to pray and showed us how, but the other night I came to your room to ask something and found you on your knees praying to Heavenly Father. If He’s important to you, He’ll be important to me.’”

The letter concluded, “I guess you never know what kind of influence you’ll be until a child observes you doing yourself what you have tried to teach him to do.”

No relating of a prayer touches me so deeply as the prayer offered by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. I believe Luke describes it best:

“He . . . went . . . to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him.

“And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.

“And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,

“Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

“And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

“And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”<sup>14</sup>

In due time came the trek to the cross. What suffering He endured as He made His burdensome way, carrying His own cross. Heard were the words He uttered upon the cross: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”<sup>15</sup>

At length Jesus declared, “It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”<sup>16</sup>

These events, coupled with His glorious Resurrection, completed the final bridge of our trilogy: *the bridge of obedience, the bridge of service, and the bridge of prayer.*

Jesus, the Bridge Builder, spanned that vast chasm we call death. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”<sup>17</sup> He did for us what we could not do for ourselves; hence, mankind can cross the bridges He built—into life eternal.

I close by paraphrasing the poem “The Bridge Builder”:

“You have crossed the chasm, deep  
and wide—

Why build you the bridge at the even-  
tide?”

“There followeth after me today  
A vast throng whose feet must pass this  
way.

This chasm that has been naught to me  
To that great throng may a pitfall be.  
They too must cross in the twilight  
dim;

Good friend, I am building the bridge  
for them.”

That we may have the wisdom and determination to cross the bridges the Savior built for each of us is my sincere prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. In James Dalton Morrison, ed., *Masterpieces of Religious Verse* (1948), 342.
2. Matthew 1:21.
3. Luke 2:40.
4. Acts 10:38.
5. Matthew 11:28–30.
6. Matthew 4:4.
7. Matthew 4:7.
8. Matthew 4:10.
9. 1 Corinthians 10:13.
10. Duke University commencement speech, 10 May 1987.
11. Matthew 25:34–40.
12. *Richard Evans’ Quote Book* (1971), 51.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 19:38.
14. Luke 22:39–44.
15. Luke 23:34.
16. John 19:30.
17. 1 Corinthians 15:22.

## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

### Jesus revealed God's true nature

Of the many magnificent purposes served in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, one great aspect of that mission often goes uncelebrated. His followers did not understand it fully at the time, and many in modern Christianity do not grasp it now, but the Savior Himself spoke of it repeatedly and emphatically. It is the grand truth that in all that Jesus came to say and do, including and especially in His atoning suffering and sacrifice, He was showing us who and what God, our Eternal Father, is like, how completely devoted He is to His children in every age and nation. In word and in deed Jesus was trying to reveal and make personal to us the true nature of His Father, our Father in Heaven.

He did this at least in part because then and now all of us need to know God more fully in order to love Him more deeply and obey Him more completely. As both Old and New Testaments declare:

"The first of all the commandments is . . . thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first [and great] commandment."<sup>1</sup>

Little wonder then that the Prophet Joseph Smith taught: "It is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty the character of God." "I want you all to know Him," he said, "and to be familiar with Him."<sup>2</sup> We must have "a *correct* idea of his . . . perfections, and attributes," an admiration for "the excellency of [His] character."<sup>3</sup> Thus the first phrase we utter in the declaration of our faith is, "We believe in God, the Eternal Father."<sup>4</sup> So, emphatically, did Jesus. Even as He acknowledged His own singular role in the divine plan, the Savior nevertheless insisted on this prayerful preamble: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God."<sup>5</sup>

### Jesus gave all glory to the Father

After generations of prophets had tried to teach the family of man the will and the way of the Father, usually with little success, God, in His ultimate effort to have us know Him, sent to earth His Only Begotten and perfect Son, created in His very likeness and image, to live and serve among mortals in the everyday rigors of life.

To come to earth with such a responsibility, to stand in place of Elohim—speaking as He would speak, judging and serving, loving and warning, forbearing and forgiving as He would do—this is a duty of such staggering proportions that you and I cannot comprehend such a thing. But in the loyalty and determination that would be characteristic of a divine child, Jesus could comprehend it, and He did it. Then, when the praise and honor began to come, He humbly directed all adulation to the Father.

"The Father . . . doeth the works," He said in earnest. "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever [the Father] doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."<sup>6</sup> On another occasion He said: "I speak that which I have seen with my Father." "I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me." "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."<sup>7</sup>

### Many feel that God is distant, impersonal

I make my own heartfelt declaration of God, our Eternal Father, this morning because some in the contemporary world suffer from a distressing misconception of Him. Among these there is a tendency to feel distant from the Father, even estranged from Him, if they believe in Him at all. And if they do believe, many moderns say they might feel comfortable in

the arms of Jesus, but they are uneasy contemplating the stern encounter of God.<sup>8</sup> Through a misreading (and surely, in some cases, a mistranslation) of the Bible, these see God the Father and Jesus Christ, His Son, as operating very differently, this in spite of the fact that in both the Old Testament and the New, the Son of God is one and the same, acting as He always does under the direction of the Father, who is Himself the same “yesterday, today, and forever.”<sup>9</sup>

### **Restoration scriptures teach about God**

In reflecting on these misconceptions, we realize that one of the remarkable contributions of the Book of Mormon is its seamless, perfectly consistent view of divinity throughout that majestic book. Here there is no Malachi-to-Matthew gap, no pause while we shift theological gears, no misreading the God who is urgently, lovingly, faithfully at work on every page of that record from its Old Testament beginning to its New Testament end. Yes, in an effort to give the world back its Bible and a correct view of Deity with it, what we have in the Book of Mormon is a uniform view of God in all His glory and goodness, all His richness and complexity—including and especially as again demonstrated through a personal appearance of His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

How grateful we are for *all* the scriptures, especially the scriptures of the Restoration, that teach us the majesty of each member of the Godhead. How we would thrill, for example, if all the world would receive and embrace the view of the Father so movingly described in the Pearl of Great Price.

There, in the midst of a grand vision of humankind which heaven opened to his view, Enoch, observing both the blessings and challenges of mortality, turns his gaze toward the Father and is stunned to see Him weeping. He says in wonder and

amazement to this most powerful Being in the universe: “How is it that thou canst weep? . . . Thou art just [and] merciful and kind forever; . . . peace . . . is the habitation of thy throne; and mercy shall go before thy face and have no end; how is it thou canst weep?”

Looking out on the events of almost any day, God replies: “Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands. . . . I gave unto them . . . [a] commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood; . . . wherefore should not the heavens weep, seeing these shall suffer?”<sup>10</sup>

That single, riveting scene does more to teach the true nature of God than any theological treatise could ever convey. It also helps us understand much more emphatically that vivid moment in the Book of Mormon allegory of the olive tree, when after digging and dunging, watering and weeding, trimming, pruning, transplanting, and grafting, the great Lord of the vineyard throws down his spade and his pruning shears and weeps, crying out to any who would listen, “What could I have done more for my vineyard?”<sup>11</sup>

What an indelible image of God’s engagement in our lives! What anguish in a parent when His children do not choose Him nor “the gospel of God” He sent!<sup>12</sup> How easy to love someone who so singularly loves us!

### **Jesus’ life shows God’s love**

Of course the centuries-long drift away from belief in such a perfect and caring Father hasn’t been helped any by the man-made creeds of erring generations which describe God variously as unknown and unknowable—formless, passionless, elusive, ethereal, simultaneously everywhere and nowhere at all. Certainly that does not describe the Being we behold through

the eyes of these prophets. Nor does it match the living, breathing, embodied Jesus of Nazareth, who was and is in “the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his [Father].”<sup>13</sup>

In that sense, Jesus did not come to improve God’s view of man nearly so much as He came to improve man’s view of God and to plead with them to love their Heavenly Father as He has always and will always love them. The plan of God, the power of God, the holiness of God, yes, even the anger and the judgment of God they had occasion to understand. But the love of God, the profound depth of His devotion to His children, they still did not fully know—until Christ came.

So feeding the hungry, healing the sick, rebuking hypocrisy, pleading for faith—this was Christ showing us the way of the Father, He who is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, long-suffering and full of goodness.”<sup>14</sup> In His life and especially in His death, Christ was declaring, “This is *God’s* compassion I am showing you, as well as that of my own.” In the perfect Son’s manifestation of the perfect Father’s care, in Their mutual suffering and shared sorrow for the sins and heartaches of the rest of us, we see ultimate meaning in the declaration, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”<sup>15</sup>

### God cherishes us, seeks our happiness

I bear personal witness this day of a personal, living God, who knows our names, hears and answers prayers, and cherishes us eternally as children of His spirit. I testify that amidst the wondrously complex tasks inherent in the universe, He seeks our individual happiness and safety above all other godly concerns. We are created in His very image and like-

ness,<sup>16</sup> and Jesus of Nazareth, His Only Begotten Son in the flesh, came to earth as the perfect mortal manifestation of His grandeur. In addition to the witness of the ancients, we also have the modern miracle of Palmyra, the appearance of God the Father and His Beloved Son, the Savior of the world, to the boy prophet Joseph Smith. I testify of that appearance, and in the words of that prophet I too declare:

“Our heavenly Father is more liberal in His views, and boundless in His mercies and blessings, than we are ready to believe or receive. . . . God does not look on sin with [the least degree of] allowance, but . . . the nearer we get to our heavenly Father, the more we are disposed to look with compassion on perishing souls; we feel that we want to take them upon our shoulders, and cast their sins behind our backs.”<sup>17</sup>

I bear witness of a God who has such shoulders. And in the spirit of the holy apostleship, I say as did one who held this office anciently: “Herein [then] is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another”<sup>18</sup>—and to love Him forever, I pray. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Mark 12:29–30; see also Matthew 22:37–38; Deuteronomy 6:5.
2. *History of the Church*, 6:305.
3. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 38, 42.
4. Articles of Faith 1:1.
5. John 17:3.
6. John 14:10; 5:19.
7. John 8:38, 28; 6:38.
8. See William Barclay, *The Mind of Jesus* (1961), especially the chapter “Looking at the Cross,” for a discussion of this modern tendency.
9. See, for example, 1 Nephi 10:18; 2 Nephi 27:23; Moroni 10:19; Doctrine and Covenants 20:12.
10. Moses 7:29–33, 37.

11. Jacob 5:41; see also verses 47, 49.
12. Romans 1:1.
13. Hebrews 1:3; see also 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15.
14. *Lectures on Faith*, 42.
15. John 3:16–17.
16. See Genesis 1:26–27; Moses 2:26–27.
17. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 257, 240–41.
18. 1 John 4:10–11.

## Elder Charles Didier

### Why missionary work?

Words are part of a vocabulary that we use to share feelings, knowledge, or information between people. Among these words, one is used to find the cause or the reason of a thing. When expressed, it is to satisfy our curiosity, to discover the unknown, or to receive answers to vital questions related to our mortal life. If not used or ignored, the thinking process ceases and ignorance prevails. So what is this essential word? Did you guess it? It is comprised of three letters; it is the word *why*.

*Why* is among the first and favorite words pronounced early by children and especially teenagers. A favorite *why* of one of my grandchildren: “Why do I need to eat vegetables?” Then, as children grow, the *whys* start the exploration of feelings: “Why did Grandmother die?” Then it is the search for knowledge or for confirmation of responsibilities: “Why do I need to go to church or serve a mission?” “Why are we commanded to share the gospel with others?”

This last question is challenging! Missionary work is also the responsibility of every member—to sound “the warning voice” to their neighbors, in mildness and in meekness (D&C 38:41). *Why*? So that others may receive the saving ordinances in the Church of Jesus Christ by inviting them to come unto Christ (see Moroni 10:32). The message of the Restoration is this invitation to know why the gospel of Jesus Christ and His true Church have been restored by a prophet in modern times.

How can you extend such an invitation to someone? First, by declaring that God our Father lives, that He loves us, and that He is a God of revelation. How is that known? By revelation and the witness of prophets.

### Revelation to Old Testament prophets

The time line of religious history starts with the Bible. It is a record of God’s early revelation to His prophets, dealing with mankind. It starts with an account of Adam and Eve, our first parents; their creation; their fall, with its consequences—mortality and separation from God; and their first steps in the mortal world. Probably then one of their first questions was “Why are we here?”

To find out, their only solution was to call upon the name of the Lord, their only source of true knowledge (see Genesis 4:26). By direct revelation, they heard the voice of the Lord commanding them that they should worship the Lord their God and should make an offering unto Him (see Genesis 4:4; Moses 5:4–5). Further revelation to Adam and Eve taught them that the offering was in similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, that Jesus Christ was the only name whereby salvation would come unto them. Then the gift of the Holy Ghost was promised to them, whereby whatsoever they would ask, it would be given to them (see Moses 5:6–7; 6:52).

Later Adam obtained by the power of the Holy Ghost a sure and infallible



witness that Jesus was the Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of the world. There was a literal restoration of an understanding of the mortal status of the fallen Adam and Eve by giving them knowledge about their relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; knowledge about the Atonement and the Resurrection; and further knowledge about the first principles and ordinances of the gospel of salvation.

Because of what Adam heard and what he saw, he qualified to be called the first prophet on earth, a personal witness of revelation given to man. His major responsibility now was to preserve the truth of the gospel and to teach it as it was given to him. Satan, on the other hand, representing the opposition, was going to do and teach anything to deny, to reject, or to ignore the gospel received by revelation, thus inducing the people who had accepted it into apostasy—a state of confusion, division, abandonment, or renunciation of their previous faith!

The rest of the story of the Old Testament became, then, a religious history of continuous revelation through various prophets like Noah, Abraham, and Moses, at various times—called dispensations—to restore what had been lost because of renewed apostasy. These prophets were always called by God. They were given divine authority; they had the keys of the priesthood; they had a divine commission to speak in the name of the Lord and to teach and prophesy of the coming and the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of the world (see Amos 3:7).

### **The message of the New Testament**

The New Testament confirms the teachings, testimonies, and prophecies of the prophets of the Old Testament. It is an account of the birth, life, and ministry of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, and of His Atonement and His Resurrection. It tells about the establishment of

His Church, His divine authority, His gospel, and His commandment to His disciples to share, to “go . . . into all the world, and preach [His] gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

The message of the New Testament was clear: there was one fold, one faith, one gospel, one priesthood, one church in order to be “in one, the children of Christ” (4 Nephi 1:17).

### **The Apostasy and the Reformation**

But again persecution, denial of divine identity, and rejection of Christ’s gospel and His authorized priesthood servants characterized the post-Resurrection era. And religious history shows us evidence of how rapidly the priesthood authority was superseded by the secular authority; how the divine doctrine was traded for shifting, distorted human philosophies; how the ordinances of salvation were altered or purchased for money; how revelation was replaced by a veil of obscurity leading into the ages of spiritual darkness.

However, there came a time during this great apostasy, which had been prophesied before, when the religious quest surfaced again—the “Why is it so?” Men who had great faith emerged to try to reform false doctrines and false spiritual authority. Their honest and sincere efforts only resulted in the creation of more churches carrying their names and their protest and adding more confusion and more divisions. In reality, two major elements were missing in the reform: revelation and authority, the Lord’s only way to communicate divine truth to mankind.

### **Restoration of knowledge and authority**

As we continue to move rapidly along this time line of religious history, we find a date and a name. The date is 1820; the name is Joseph Smith. Pondering about the total religious confusion and church division of his time, this young man asked

himself, “If any one of [these churches] be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?” (Joseph Smith—History 1:10).

Why such confusion? The prophetic model was to ask of God. Religious history suddenly repeated itself according to God’s scenario of how to answer mankind’s *whys*. Once again a vision came as an answer, this time a vision of the Father and the Son. Once again a divine testimony of the Father was given: “*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). Once again direct revelation answered Joseph Smith’s question: “Which of all the [churches] was right . . . and which I should join. I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong” (Joseph Smith—History 1:18–19). Once again apostasy was declared from the source of truth—by Jesus Christ Himself. And once again it had to be followed by a restoration, and indeed it was.

In the following years, by revelation, Joseph Smith received full divine doctrinal knowledge and the authority and keys of the priesthood. Finally in 1830, the Church of Jesus Christ, with all the doctrines of salvation and the ordinances thereof, was restored. Joseph Smith qualified to be called the prophet of the Restoration in modern times.

### **Book of Mormon answers ultimate *why*?**

As the Bible is the tangible evidence of divine revelation to the prophets of ancient

times, in the same way the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ is the modern convincing evidence that Joseph Smith was a prophet who received revelation and authority as they did. A testimony of the veracity of the Book of Mormon helps people find answers to *why* the gospel and the Church of Jesus Christ have been restored through a prophet and *why* we have a living prophet today, namely Gordon B. Hinckley. It also answers the ultimate *why*: all the ordinances of the gospel provide the greatest blessing to prepare our salvation and to fulfill our mortal purpose to create eternal families. This message of the Restoration is true because it is divine.

Of this I testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Faust**

Thank you, brethren, for your timely remarks.

The choir and congregation will now sing “Now Let Us Rejoice.” We shall then hear from Sister Sydney S. Reynolds, first counselor in the Primary general presidency. Following her remarks, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Now Let Us Rejoice.”

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## **Sister Sydney S. Reynolds**

### **The Lord knows us and loves us**

Joseph Smith at age 14 had to be one of the least conspicuous human beings on the earth, and yet the God of heaven knew him and called him by name in the Sacred Grove. I believe the Lord knows my name and your name as well.

In Primary we teach the children that each is a child of God and that their Heavenly Father knows them and loves them. Primary and priesthood leaders model what the Savior would do when they call a child by his or her name. Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep,

and am known of mine.”<sup>1</sup> The scriptures testify, “He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.”<sup>2</sup>

The Lord not only knows who we are, He knows where we are, and He leads us to do good. One day a mother I know felt impressed to call her daughter. (This kind of thing happens to mothers all the time.) It was the middle of the day, and Mom was at work, which made the call out of the ordinary. To her surprise, her son-in-law answered the phone—he’s not usually home on a workday either. As he handed the phone to his wife, he said, “It’s your mother with her usual inspiration.”

They had just been to the doctor. She came on the phone, close to tears, and said, “The ultrasound shows the cord is double-wrapped around the baby’s neck. The doctor says we have no choice but to do a C-section and soon.” Then came the real cause for the distress: “And he says I can’t lift anything heavier than the new baby for four weeks!” She needed reassurance before going into the surgery that the Lord knew her need and loved her—and that there would be help in tending the three little ones at home, who were scarcely more than babies themselves. When mothers—and fathers—pray for the Lord to bless and strengthen their families, He often shows them the way.

### **Testimony in Portuguese touches a heart**

Sister Gayle Clegg of the Primary general presidency and her husband lived for a number of years in Brazil. Recently she had a Primary assignment in Japan. As she came into the chapel on Sunday, she noticed among the Japanese Saints a Brazilian family. “They just looked Brazilian,” she said. She only had a minute to greet them and found the mother and children very enthusiastic but noticed that the father was rather quiet. “I’ll have a chance to talk with them after the meeting,” she thought as she was quickly ushered to the stand.

She delivered her message in English, which was translated into Japanese, and then she felt impressed to bear her testimony in Portuguese as well. She hesitated, as there were no translators for Portuguese and 98 percent of the people would not understand what she said.

After the meeting the Brazilian father came up to her and said, “Sister, the customs are so different here, and I have been lonely. It is difficult to come to church and not understand anything. Sometimes I wonder if I would be better off just reading my scriptures at home. I told my wife, ‘I’ll give it one more chance,’ and I came today for what I thought would be the last time. When you bore your testimony in Portuguese, the Spirit touched my heart, and I knew that this was where I belonged. God knows I am here, and He will help me.” And he joined the others in putting away the chairs.

Was it a coincidence that the only Portuguese-speaking member of the Primary presidency was sent to Japan instead of to Portugal? Or was it because the Lord knew someone there needed what only she could give—and she had the courage to follow a prompting of the Spirit? One of the great blessings of having a calling in the Church is that the Lord, through His Spirit, will inspire us to help those we are called to serve.

### **John Orth pays tithing and is blessed**

Each of us who pays a full tithe can testify that the blessings of the Lord come to us personally and meet our individual needs. The Lord has promised that if we pay our tithing, He will open the windows of heaven and pour us out a blessing so great that we will scarcely have room enough to receive it.<sup>3</sup>

Many years ago John Orth worked in a foundry in Australia, and in a terrible accident, hot molten lead splashed onto his face and body. He was administered to, and some of the vision was restored

to his right eye, but he was completely blind in his left. Because he couldn't see well, he lost his job. He tried to get employment with his wife's family, but their business failed due to the Depression. He was forced to go door-to-door seeking odd jobs and handouts to pay for food and rent.

One year he did not pay any tithing and went to talk to the branch president. The branch president understood the situation but asked John to make it a matter of prayer and fasting so that he could find a way to pay his tithing. John and his wife, Alice, fasted and prayed and determined that the only thing of value they owned was her engagement ring—a beautiful ring bought in happier times. After much anguish, they took the ring to a pawnbroker, where they learned it was worth enough to pay their tithing and some outstanding bills. That Sunday, John went to the branch president and paid his tithing. As he left the office, he happened to meet the mission president, who noticed his damaged eyes.

Brother Orth's son, now serving as a bishop in Adelaide, later wrote: "We believe that [the mission president] was an eye doctor, for he was commonly called President Dr. Rees. He spoke to Dad and was able to examine him and offer suggestions to help his eyesight. Dad followed his advice, . . . and in due course sight was restored—15 percent sight to his left eye and 95 percent sight to his right eye—and with the help of glasses he could see again."<sup>4</sup> With his vision restored, John was never unemployed again; he redeemed the ring, which is now a family heirloom, and paid a full tithing for the rest of his life. The Lord knew John Orth, and He knew who could help him.

"President Dr. Rees" was my mother's father, and he probably never knew of the miracle that was wrought that day. Generations were blessed because a family decided they would pay their tithing regardless of the difficulty—and then met

a man who "happened by" and who "happened" to be an eye surgeon who was able to make a great difference in their lives. While some may be tempted to believe these are just coincidences, I have confidence that even a sparrow cannot fall to the ground but He knows it.<sup>5</sup>

Our family didn't know this story until two years ago, but we know this about our grandfather: he loved the Lord and tried to serve Him all his life. And we know this about the Lord: He knows who we are and where we are, and He knows who needs our help.

### **Nothing can separate us from God's love**

I have seen you who know the Lord and love Him honestly tell a young person who was struggling to find the way, "God loves you. He wants you to be successful. His greatest desire is to bless you." I have heard you testify to a grieving friend, "I know there is a life after this one. I know your child still lives and that there is a way for you to see him and be with him again." I have watched many of you tell a discouraged young mother, "Let me help you—what you are doing is the most important work in the world." I have seen those you touch not only recognize your love but feel the Lord's love and power as His Spirit bears witness to them that what you have said is true.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? I am persuaded, with Paul, that neither tribulation, nor life, nor death, nor any other circumstance shall have the power to separate us from His love.<sup>6</sup>

The Savior gave His life for each one of us. He knows our joys and our sorrows. He knows my name and your name. When we covenant with Him at baptism, we promise to keep His commandments, to always remember Him, and to take His name upon us. Ultimately, His is the name by which we want to be called, for "there shall be no other name given nor any other

way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.”<sup>7</sup> I bear my witness that He lives and loves us and calls us by name to come unto Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. John 10:14.
2. John 10:3.
3. See Malachi 3:10.
4. Letter from J. Orth, Dec. 13, 2001.
5. See Matthew 10:29.
6. See Romans 8:35–39.
7. Mosiah 3:17.

## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

### Self-improvement programs

Recently I have noticed the large number of self-improvement programs that are available. There must be a tremendous demand for these products because one can scarcely turn on the television or radio without seeing or hearing promotions for products that promise everything from losing weight to growing a lush crop of thick hair. At times I wonder if the people who make these products know me personally.

Today I would like to offer my own self-improvement program. It consists of three steps that have been useful to me, and I am confident they will be helpful to you as well. What’s more, this self-improvement program is free. There’s no need for you to pull out your credit card. No toll-free number will flash on the screen warning that you have five minutes remaining to take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime offer.

### Parable of the three choices

Perhaps the best way to teach these principles is by way of parable.

There was once a man named John who, although still relatively young, had experienced much suffering and sorrow. Homeless and addicted to alcohol and other drugs, John was terribly sick and weary of life. The more he descended into illness and despair, the more he knew that

if he didn’t make changes—and quickly—there was a very real possibility he would die miserable, useless, and alone.

Perhaps because he had attended Primary a few times when he was a boy, John ended up in a nearby meetinghouse where he asked to see the bishop.

“I have ruined my life,” John said between tortured sobs that emerged from the depths of his harrowed soul. He spoke of the mistakes he had made and the path of self-destruction and misery he had trod.

As the bishop listened to John’s sad story, he could tell that the man truly wanted to repent and change his life. But he could also sense that John had little confidence that he could change.

The bishop thought for a moment about what he could say. Finally, he looked up and said, “John, I have made three choices in my life that have been of value to me. They may be of assistance to you as well.”

“Please, tell me,” John pleaded. “I’ll do anything. I just want to start over. I want to go back.”

### Choose to begin repentance now

The bishop smiled and told him, “The first thing you should understand is that you can’t go back and begin where you once were. But all is not lost. You can begin where you are. Choose to begin your repentance now.”

To some degree, we all are like John. We have made mistakes. But no matter how badly we want to go back and begin again, we can't. We can, however, repent and begin where we are today.

In the Book of Mormon we read of Alma the Younger. He was the son of a great prophet, but he turned against his father and sought to do evil. After a visit from an angel that left him incapacitated and unable to speak, Alma repented and worked for the rest of his life to repair the damage he had done. As a result, he blessed and enriched the lives of thousands of others. Alma did not accept that he was doomed because of past mistakes. He understood that he could not erase the past. But he also understood that he had the power to repent and begin anew from where he was.

How do we begin to repent?

By first acknowledging our errors and deciding to repent. By committing today—this very day—to do better, to live noble and compassionate lives, to strive each day to be more like the Savior.

Our destiny and ultimate fate depend upon our daily decisions.

The great Old Testament prophet Joshua knew this when he said, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."<sup>1</sup>

Joshua understood how critical it is to choose without delay to be more righteous. We too should decide now. Will our lives be filled with regret and despair? Or will we repent and strive each day to make our days worthwhile and meaningful?

Tomorrow's joy or tomorrow's despair has its roots in decisions we make today. Perhaps some people think to themselves: "I know I need to change some things in my life. Maybe later, but not now."

Those who stand at the threshold of life always waiting for the right time to change are like the man who stands at the

bank of a river waiting for the water to pass so he can cross on dry land.

Today is the day of decision.

When John heard the bishop's words, he promised he would do what the bishop had said. Because of his addictions, John knew he needed to repent and improve his health. So he checked himself into a facility where he underwent the prolonged process of recovery. He began eating nutritious food. He began to walk and to do other exercises.

### **Choose your priorities**

Weeks passed. John was able to free himself from his addictions. He could see that his health was improving and he was getting stronger. But still he was not satisfied. There were so many things about his life that needed improvement that he felt overwhelmed and discouraged.

So, once again, he scheduled a meeting with his bishop.

That is when he learned the second choice: "John," the bishop said to him, "you'll most likely have a rough time if you think you can make yourself perfect all at once. What you must learn is to choose your priorities. You have to put first things first."

In most cases, growth comes slowly—one step at a time. We understand this when it comes to mastering a musical instrument, becoming an accomplished athlete, or flying a jet aircraft. Yet we often can scarcely forgive ourselves when we don't make the progress we expect in all areas of our own lives.

Great sculptors and artists spend countless hours perfecting their talents. They don't pick up a chisel or a brush and palette, expecting immediate perfection. They understand that they will make many errors as they learn, but they start with the basics, the key fundamentals first.

So it is with us.

We become masters of our lives in the same way—by focusing on first things first.

We all have a pretty good idea of the most important decisions we need to make—decisions that will improve our lives and bring us greater happiness and peace. That is where we should start. That is where we should place our greatest effort.

Each night before I go to bed, I take out a small card and write a list of the things I need to do the next day in order of their priority.

When I arrive at the office each morning, I check my card and put all my efforts into the first item on the list. When I accomplish that item, I move on to the second and so on. Some days I finish every item on my list. On other days some tasks are not completed. I don't become discouraged, however, because I'm focusing my energies on the things that matter most.

John began to understand that he couldn't change everything that was wrong with his life in an instant, but he could choose his priorities. He could focus on the things that mattered most, and with time his life would begin to improve.

With help from the elders quorum president, John found a modest place to live. He knew he needed to find a way to support himself, and as his health and attitude improved, he found part-time work.

Each night before John went to bed, he made a list of the most important things he needed to accomplish the next day.

### **Choose the right**

Eventually, John was earning a steady income. He moved into a more comfortable place and bought a car. Yet, although he was feeling much better about his life, he still felt that something was missing.

Consequently, John returned a third time to meet with his bishop.

"The reason you still feel empty," the bishop said, "is because you have not made the third choice."

John asked what it was.

"It's not enough to make choices and decisions and to work on them each day," the bishop said. "Many have spent their lives in productive labor and have accomplished much. But they still feel empty. At the end of their days they lament that their lives had little meaning."

That was exactly what John had been feeling. The bishop continued, "It is not enough to do things. We must do the right things—the things our Heavenly Father would want us to do."

"How do I know what the right things are?" John asked.

The bishop smiled and pulled from his desk a set of scriptures. The leather cover was scuffed and wrinkled. The gilded edges on the paper were nearly worn away. "Through the scriptures and the words of latter-day prophets," the bishop replied. "These are the 'right things.' Some believe that the commandments of our Heavenly Father are restrictive and hard. To the contrary, they're a handbook to happiness. Every aspect of the gospel of Jesus Christ—the principles, the doctrines, and the commandments—is a part of our Heavenly Father's plan to help us obtain peace and happiness."

The bishop turned to the Book of Mormon and read the words of King Benjamin: "Consider . . . the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness."<sup>2</sup>

As the bishop spoke, John thought about his own life. The things he had acquired hadn't brought him happiness. Perhaps what the bishop was saying was true. Maybe happiness did come from living in harmony with the commandments of our Heavenly Father.

"Remember the words of the Savior," the bishop said, as though he knew what

John was thinking. “‘For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?’”<sup>3</sup>

That very night, John made a commitment to open the word of God and to learn for himself the commandments and doctrines of his Heavenly Father. No longer did he resist the words of the Lord, but rather he embraced and cherished them. As he did, the emptiness in his soul began to shrink, and in its place he gradually discovered joy and peace that surpassed his understanding.

The things the bishop had told John had indeed transformed his life. Where once he was broken, sorrowful, and close to death, now he felt alive, vibrant, and filled with joy.

### **God has given all we need to choose right**

Brothers and sisters, our loving Heavenly Father has given us the scriptures to teach us the way to peace and happiness. Today we have great reason to rejoice, for His Son speaks to all of us!

The Lord does not sit in His heavens, silent and sealed behind impenetrable walls. Under the direction of our Heavenly Father, the Lord gives direction to His anointed servants. At this very hour, our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, directs the holy work of the Lord here upon the earth.

In addition, the Light of Christ leads all mortals to our Heavenly Father and to His truths. It teaches us to love the Lord and to love our fellowmen, for “the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil.”<sup>4</sup>

We have little excuse for not choosing the way of the Lord. Do you suppose at the day of judgment, our Savior will care one little bit about the wealth we have accumulated or the praise we have received? He wants us to come unto Him, to learn of Him, and to discover the pure love of Christ that comes through embracing His word and obeying His commandments.

That is the way to remove emptiness from our lives and to fill our souls with joy beyond description.

### **Review of three choices**

May I review these three choices for you to consider? No doubt you have had choices of your own that you have successfully followed throughout your life.

First, choose to begin the process of repentance now. Do not delay. Attend your meetings and serve cheerfully in the Church. Learn and live by gospel principles. Begin now to turn your steps toward the temple.

Second, choose your priorities. Let your family come first. Hold worthwhile family home evenings. Let the time that you spend with your families be consistent with how important they are. Cherish and nurture family members, and never allow busy schedules and frustrations to drive a wedge between you and your loved ones. Strive each day to be more obedient to the Lord’s commandments.

Third, choose the right. Study the scriptures and the words of our prophet today, even President Gordon B. Hinckley. Apply these sacred teachings to your lives. Reach out to those in distress—the lonely, the sick, and the needy. Do what you can to relieve suffering and help others become self-reliant. As you do so, the Lord will be well pleased with you.

Brothers and sisters, I know that our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son live. I testify to you that Joseph Smith was raised up to organize the Lord’s Church in the dispensation of the fulness of times. As a special witness of Jesus Christ, I know that the Savior laid down His life for us. Through His Atonement, all mankind can repent and be cleansed of sin. We can return to our Heavenly Father and realize the value of our Savior’s infinite sacrifice. This I testify in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.



## NOTES

1. Joshua 24:15.
2. Mosiah 2:41.
3. Mark 8:36.
4. Moroni 7:16.

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The choir sang “My Redeemer Lives.”

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**President Faust**

The choir has sung “My Redeemer Lives.” We express our thanks to the Tab-

ernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

As you leave the conference we ask you to obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following President Hinckley’s remarks, the choir will sing “O Divine Redeemer.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Keith Crockett of the Seventy. The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

**All working as one in a great cause**

My beloved brethren and sisters, I wish to acknowledge my gratitude for your sustaining faith and prayers. The Lord has imposed upon the leadership of this Church a great and serious trust, and you have supported us in that responsibility. We know that you pray for us, and we wish you to know that we pray for you.

Not a day passes that I do not thank the Lord for faithful Latter-day Saints. No day passes that I do not pray that He will bless you wherever you are and whatever your needs.

I wish to remind you that we are all in this together. It is not a matter of the General Authorities on one hand and the membership of the Church on the other. We are all working as one in a great cause. We are all members of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Within your sphere of responsibility you have as serious an obligation as do I within my sphere of responsibility. Each of us should be determined to build the kingdom of God on the earth and to further the work of righteousness.

I think I can honestly say that we have no selfish desires with reference to this work other than that it succeed.

**Be strong and of a good courage**

We of the First Presidency are constantly dealing with a great variety of problems. They come before us every day.

At the close of one particularly difficult day, I looked up at a portrait of Brigham Young that hangs on my wall. I asked, “Brother Brigham, what should we do?” I thought I saw him smile a little, and then he seemed to say, “In my day, I had problems enough of my own. Don’t ask me what to do. This is your watch. Ask the Lord, whose work this really is.” And this, I assure you, is what we do and must always do.

As I reflected on these matters that recent difficult day, I opened my Bible to the first chapter of Joshua and read these words: “Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee” (Joshua 1:9).

I said to myself, “There is never reason to despair. This is the work of God. Notwithstanding the efforts of all who oppose it, it will go forward as the God of heaven has designed it should do.”

### **Stand as an ensign to the nations**

I turned the pages of the Old Testament to the second chapter of Isaiah and read these words:

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

“And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:2–3).

Ever since the Salt Lake Temple was dedicated, we have interpreted that scripture from Isaiah, repeated again in Micah (see Micah 4:1–2), as applying to this sacred house of the Lord. And of this place, since the day of its dedication, an ever-increasing number from across the world have said in effect, “Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that He might teach us of His ways, that we might walk in His paths.”

I believe and testify that it is the mission of this Church to stand as an ensign to the nations and a light to the world. We have had placed upon us a great, all-encompassing mandate from which we cannot shrink nor turn aside. We accept that mandate and are determined to fulfill it, and with the help of God we shall do it.

### **Stand firm in holding back the world**

There are forces all around us that would deter us from that effort. The world is constantly crowding in on us. From all

sides we feel the pressure to soften our stance, to give in here a little and there a little.

We must never lose sight of our objective. We must ever keep before us the goal which the Lord has set for us.

To quote Paul:

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:10–12).

We must stand firm. We must hold back the world. If we do so, the Almighty will be our strength and our protector, our guide and our revelator. We shall have the comfort of knowing that we are doing what He would have us do. Others may not agree with us, but I am confident that they will respect us. We will not be left alone. There are many not of our faith but who feel as we do. They will support us. They will sustain us in our efforts.

We cannot be arrogant. We cannot be self-righteous. The very situation in which the Lord has placed us requires that we be humble as the beneficiaries of His direction.

While we cannot agree with others on certain matters, we must never be disagreeable. We must be friendly, soft-spoken, neighborly, and understanding.

### **Youth must hold to the faith**

Now I emphasize a theme already treated in this conference. To our young people, the glorious youth of this generation, I say, be true. Hold to the faith. Stand firmly for what you know to be right.

You face tremendous temptation. It comes at you in the halls of popular entertainment, on the Internet, in the movies, on television, in cheap literature, and in

other ways—subtle, titillating, and difficult to resist. Peer pressure may be almost overpowering. But, my dear young friends, you must not give in. You must be strong. You must take the long look ahead rather than succumbing to the present seductive temptation.

#### *Avoid suggestive music and entertainment*

Uncouth-looking entertainers draw big crowds of our youth. They grow rich from high admission prices. Their songs, so many of them, are suggestive in nature.

Pornography is everywhere with its seductive invitation. You must turn away from it. It can enslave you. It can destroy you. Recognize it for what it is—tawdry and sleazy stuff created and distributed by those who grow rich at the expense of those who see it.

The sanctity of sex is utterly destroyed in its salacious portrayal in the media. That which by its nature is inherently beautiful is corrupted in its popular presentation. I was pleased to note that our Church-owned television station here in Salt Lake City refused to carry a network program of a salacious nature. It was also interesting to note that the only other station belonging to this network to cancel the broadcast was one in South Bend, Indiana, the location of the University of Notre Dame. It is comforting to know that there are others who feel as strongly as we feel and are willing to do something about it.

Life is better than that which is so frequently portrayed. Nature is better than that. Love is better than that. This kind of entertainment is only an evil caricature of the good and the beautiful.

#### *Shun alcohol*

You young men and women who are hearing me today, you university students on many campuses realize that one of the great problems on these campuses is binge drinking. It diminishes abilities. It destroys

lives. It wastes money and time and constructive effort. What a sorry sight it is to see bright young people damage themselves and ruin their opportunities with excessive drinking.

It was a great tribute to the students of Brigham Young University when the *Princeton Review* found them to be the most “stone-cold sober” student body in America. Most of you, of course, cannot attend BYU, but wherever you are you can live by the same standards required on the BYU campus.

#### *Stand together*

I recently read in our *New Era* magazine an article on young Latter-day Saints in Memphis, Tennessee. In some instances they are the only Latter-day Saints on campus. One of them is quoted as saying, “I may be the only member in my school, but . . . even when I’m physically alone, I’m never spiritually alone” (in Arianne B. Cope, “Smiling in Memphis,” *New Era*, Oct. 2003, 23–24).

Another is quoted: “I know a lot of teens wonder if they really know if the gospel is true. But . . . here you have to know one way or the other because people are asking you about it every day. Every time you answer a question, you share your testimony” (*New Era*, Oct. 2003, 25).

These young people, scattered through that big city, have learned to stand together, to bolster one another.

#### *The best generation*

God bless you, my dear young friends. You are the best generation we have ever had. You know the gospel better. You are more faithful in your duties. You are stronger to face the temptations which come your way. Live by your standards. Pray for the guidance and protection of the Lord. He will never leave you alone. He will comfort you. He will sustain you. He will bless and magnify you and make your reward sweet and beautiful. And you

will discover that your example will attract others who will take courage from your strength.

### **Take on the luster of the life of Christ**

As it is with the youth, so it is with you adults. If we are to hold up this Church as an ensign to the nations and a light to the world, we must take on more of the luster of the life of Christ individually and in our own personal circumstances. In standing for the right, we must not be fearful of the consequences. We must never be afraid. Said Paul to Timothy:

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord” (2 Timothy 1:7–8).

This Church, I submit, is far more than a social organization where we gather together to enjoy one another’s company. It is more than Sunday School and Relief Society and priesthood meeting. It is more than sacrament meeting, more even than temple service. It is the kingdom of God in the earth. It behooves us to act in a manner befitting membership in that kingdom.

### **Stand in the stature of the priesthood**

You men who hold the priesthood have such a tremendous responsibility. You must avoid the sultry siren voice of the world. You must rise above it. You must stand in the stature of the priesthood of God. You must eschew evil in all of its forms and take on the nature of goodness and decency, letting the light, the divine light, shine through your actions.

There is no way that a home can be a place of refuge and peace if the man who resides there is not an understanding and helpful husband and father. The strength to be gained from our homes will make us better able to face the world, more acceptable to the society in which we move,

more valuable to those who employ us—better men.

I know many such men. It is evident that they love their wives and their children. They are proud of them. And the marvelous thing is, they are tremendously successful in their chosen professions. They are magnified and honored and respected.

And to you women. I spoke at length to the women of the Relief Society a week ago. That talk represented my heartfelt views concerning you. You too can take on the luster of Christ. You too can be strong and encouraging and beautiful and helpful.

### **Unseen forces will assist us**

I remind all of us that we are Latter-day Saints. We have made covenants with our Heavenly Father, sacred and binding. Those covenants, if we keep them, will make us better fathers and mothers, better sons and daughters.

I believe that others will rally around us if we will do so. We can stand for truth and goodness, and we will not stand alone. Moreover, we shall have the unseen forces of heaven to assist us.

I take you back to the Old Testament:

“And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?”

“And he answered, Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

“And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha” (2 Kings 6:15–17).

The Lord has said to us: “Therefore, fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and

hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail. . . . Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not" (D&C 6:34, 36). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "O Divine Redeemer."  
Elder Keith Crockett offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 173rd Semi-annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 5, 2003. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir. Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts were the organists.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### **President James E. Faust**

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 173rd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and to many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings via radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "From All That Dwell below the Skies." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Cree-L Kofford, who yesterday received emeritus status.

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The choir sang "From All That Dwell below the Skies."

Elder Cree-L Kofford offered the invocation.

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### **President Faust**

The choir will now sing "Lead, Kindly Light." We will then hear from Elders L. Tom Perry and Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. They will be followed by Elder William W. Parmley of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Lead, Kindly Light."

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## Elder L. Tom Perry

### **Revelation and inspiration**

"We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup>

We declare to the world that the heavens are not closed. God continues to reveal His will to mankind, as He has in all periods of time when He has had authorized servants upon the earth. This fact should be familiar to all of our Father in

Heaven's children, for the scriptures give abundant evidence of this.

Sometimes we define the communication of God's will as revelation. Sometimes we refer to such communication as inspiration. Revelation, however, is a much broader term. While inspiration can properly be considered as revelation, revelation can also include visions, dreams, the spoken word, or other spiritual manifestations. Elder Talmage explained:

*"Revelation signifies the making known of divine truth by communication from the heavens. . . .*

*"The word inspiration is sometimes invested with a [significance] almost identical with that of revelation, though by origin and early usage it possessed a distinctive meaning. To inspire is literally to animate with the spirit; a man is inspired when under the influence of a power other than his own. Divine inspiration may be regarded as a lower or less directly intensive operation of spiritual influence upon man than is . . . revelation. The difference therefore is rather one of degree than of kind."*<sup>2</sup>

### **Revelation follows the Lord's order**

There is order in the way the Lord reveals His will to mankind. We all have the right to petition the Lord and receive inspiration through His Spirit within the realm of our own stewardship. Parents can receive revelation for their own family, a bishop for his assigned congregation, and on up to the First Presidency for the entire Church. However, we cannot receive revelation for someone else's stewardship. The Prophet Joseph Smith declared:

*"It is contrary to the economy of God for any member of the Church, or any one, to receive instruction for those in authority, higher than themselves."*<sup>3</sup>

*"Revelations of the mind and will of God to the Church, are to come through the [First] Presidency. This is the order of heaven, and the power and privilege of this Priesthood. It is also the privilege of*

*any officer in this Church to obtain revelations, so far as relates to his particular calling and duty in the Church."*<sup>4</sup>

### **Be worthy to receive guidance**

The closer we keep our lives in harmony with the direction the Lord has given us to guide our lives, the more we will be in tune with His Spirit. A person who petitions the Lord for guidance must be worthy to receive it. His life must be in harmony and in keeping with the standards the Lord has prescribed for His children. His life must be in good standing before God and His people. It must be in harmony with the teachings of the scriptures, the prophets, and the order of the Church.

A person could say that he or she had received a revelation to be dishonest in order to improve his or her financial situation. Or a person may say that he or she has been instructed that the Church should go a different direction than it is being led by the prophet. We would immediately know that such a claim would not be from God.

There is great strength and power in the fact that millions throughout the world share the same testimony of God, the Savior, and the calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith. We have never been encouraged to be blindly obedient; it is an intelligent obedience that characterizes members of the Church.

Brigham Young is reported to have said that the greatest fear he had was that members of the Church would take what he said as the mind and will of God without first praying and obtaining a witness of the same for themselves.<sup>5</sup>

### **Obedience yields blessings**

In establishing His kingdom on earth, the Lord set forth fundamental principles and laws to govern His children here. Obedience to those laws and principles yields blessings that He has covenanted to be-

stow upon us. Violations are subject to His judgments.

Reviewing man's history reveals examples of obedience yielding blessings and disobedience yielding sorrow and destruction. The course we are to follow is revealed through His holy prophets, who direct us to be obedient to the Lord's instructions.

### *The building of the tabernacle*

One example is the Lord's directions to the children of Israel as they journeyed in the wilderness. In order that they would have a centerpiece for their worship and activity, the Lord instructed Moses to build a tabernacle. The tabernacle was a forerunner of the temple, made portable so they could easily carry it with them.

"For the Lord [said] unto Moses, . . .

"But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle.

"And when the tabernacle setteth forward, the Levites shall take it down: and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up. . . .

"And the children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard, throughout their hosts.

"But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel: and the Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony."<sup>6</sup>

This tabernacle became the center of their camp as they journeyed to the promised land. Here sacred services could be performed. The day the tabernacle was complete, a cloud covered it. The cloud was removed when they were to go forward in their journey. When the cloud

covered the tabernacle, they were not to travel.

### *Tabernacle removed because of disobedience*

The Lord directed them in their journey to camp at the foot of Mount Sinai. Here Moses was instructed to climb the mountain and communicate with the Lord. Here he received instructions on how the children of Israel would be governed in the wilderness. Moses was also given "two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God."<sup>7</sup>

Moses was away from the people for an extended period of time. "And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him."<sup>8</sup>

Aaron succumbed to the will of the people and told them to gather all their gold and silver and precious things and melt them into a form that made a golden calf, an idol that they could worship and carry with them as they journeyed. In the meantime, Moses was receiving the two tablets of testimony containing God's commandments to His people. With the tablets in hand, Moses descended from the mountain.

"And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount."<sup>9</sup>

Because of the disobedience of the children of Israel, "Moses took the tabernacle [out of their midst], and pitched it without the camp."<sup>10</sup>

Now their centerpiece, the tabernacle, was away from them. They could no longer be guided and protected by its presence. Now only the faithful were allowed to

come to the tabernacle. One thing the Lord would not tolerate was the worship of other gods. Because of their many years of captivity in Egypt, this was challenging to the children of Israel.

*Obedience brings God's law through Moses*

After a period of pleading for forgiveness from the Lord, Moses was instructed to "hew . . . two tables of stone like unto the first" and ascend up the mount.<sup>11</sup> He spent 40 days and 40 nights on top of Mount Sinai, without bread or water, and the Lord instructed him:

"Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.

" . . . And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments."<sup>12</sup>

Thus the Ten Commandments were given to mankind to follow and to use throughout their lives. Obedience finally brought the law of the Lord to the children of Israel. Disobedience only delayed the progress of the children of Israel toward their promised land. They had to be worthy to receive the law of the Lord.

Note that the Lord delivered His word to Moses, His prophet. The Lord knows what will bless His children, and to that end He delivers laws through His prophets to the people. If obeyed, these laws will lead us back to God. We do not determine for ourselves what those laws are. They are given from God to man.

**The Lord's word revealed through Joseph**

The Savior fulfilled the law of Moses,<sup>13</sup> and similar divine instructions were revealed in our day through the Prophet Joseph Smith, as contained in the 59th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. The Lord commanded:

"Wherefore, I give unto them a commandment, saying thus: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with

all thy might, mind, and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him.

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Thou shalt not steal; neither commit adultery, nor kill, nor do anything like unto it.

"Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things.

"Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

"And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;

"For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High;

"Nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days and at all times;

"But remember that on this, the Lord's day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord.

"And on this day thou shalt do none other thing, only let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart that thy fasting may be perfect, or, in other words, that thy joy may be full."<sup>14</sup>

**Lord's system of communication works**

Note that the channel of communication comes from the Lord to us. So many times in our history, in our self-justification, we have attempted to reverse that channel and change God's laws. We find no record of this ever working.

We do find, however, that whenever God's children act contrary to His law, divine consistency and order are interrupted with disobedience and destruction. The Lord's system works. Adherence to His laws and commandments will always bring about His promised blessings.



### Nephi obeys and receives revelation

Nephi was commanded by the Lord to obtain the brass plates to carry with them as they journeyed into the wilderness. Laban resisted every effort they had made to obtain the record. The Lord then delivered Laban into Nephi's hands. Concerning the slaying of Laban, Nephi was taught: "It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief."<sup>15</sup>

This revelation helped Nephi recall something the Lord previously promised him in the wilderness: "Inasmuch as thy seed shall keep my commandments, they shall prosper in the land of promise."<sup>16</sup>

Then Nephi reasoned:

"Yea, and I also thought that they could not keep the commandments of the Lord according to the law of Moses, save they should have the law.

"And I also knew that the law was engraven upon the plates of brass."<sup>17</sup>

Repeatedly the scriptures declare that the Lord gives His commandments to the children of men through living prophets. No committee, assembly, or any other authority has the right to dictate to Him doctrine that is contrary to His law. God's eternal blessings are contingent upon our

obedience and adherence to the word of the Lord that is revealed to us through His holy prophets.

God grant that we may always have the will and the courage to be obedient to Him who is our Eternal Father and to His chosen Son, our Lord and Savior, that we may enjoy Their blessings here and in the eternities to come. In the name of our Lord and Savior, even Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Articles of Faith 1:9.
2. James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. (1924), 296.
3. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 21.
4. *Teachings*, 111.
5. See *Deseret News*, Dec. 9, 1857, 317; Feb. 12, 1862, 257.
6. Numbers 1:48, 50–53.
7. Exodus 31:18.
8. Exodus 32:1.
9. Exodus 32:19.
10. Exodus 33:7.
11. Exodus 34:1.
12. Exodus 34:27–28.
13. See 3 Nephi 15:5.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 59:5–13.
15. 1 Nephi 4:13.
16. 1 Nephi 4:14.
17. 1 Nephi 4:15–16.

## Elder Henry B. Eyring

### A testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith

On the evening before he was martyred in Carthage, the Prophet Joseph Smith bore testimony to his guards. He testified of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. He bore witness of the administration of angels and that the kingdom of God was again established upon the earth.

I wonder if any of those guards prayed that night. The Holy Ghost was ready to tell them that the remarkable message was

true. With a testimony of the Spirit, they would have known that they should ask for baptism. And then they could have received the priceless gift of the Holy Ghost. With that gift, they could know the truth of all things. I wonder if any of them sensed that night how close they were to starting down the only path which would lead them to the Savior in the world to come, to see His face with pleasure and to hear the words, "Come unto me, ye blessed, there is a place prepared for you in the mansions of my Father."<sup>1</sup>

We all have people we love. Think of them now. They may be our children or our grandchildren. Perhaps you think of your husband or your wife. It may be someone you are teaching as a missionary. It may be a friend. You want with all your heart to have them someday hear those words from the Master. And for that blessing to come, they will need that testimony offered by the Prophet in Carthage burning in their hearts through all the tests of life, as it did in his.

### Testimony of the Three Witnesses

To begin, we can offer them the testimony of eyewitnesses. The Lord gave others to stand with Joseph to verify what the Lord had done. They were with the Prophet when the heavens were opened.

Oliver Cowdery preached the first missionary sermon the first Sunday after the Church was organized. He went into the mission field to proclaim what he knew by what he saw and heard and felt. With two others he signed a testimony which they never denied. Their witness is printed in the front of the Book of Mormon:

“Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record, which is a record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, their brethren, and also of the people of Jared, who came from the tower of which hath been spoken. And we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true. And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates; and they have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man. And we declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes,

that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true. And it is marvelous in our eyes. Nevertheless, the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things. And we know that if we are faithful in Christ, we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men, and be found spotless before the judgment-seat of Christ, and shall dwell with him eternally in the heavens. And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen.

Oliver Cowdery  
David Whitmer  
Martin Harris”<sup>2</sup>

### The Holy Ghost bears witness of truth

Those you love can have more than the physical evidence given to those witnesses by what they saw and heard. Those three witnesses had something more—something we all need. The Holy Ghost bore witness to their minds and hearts that what they saw and heard was true. The Spirit told them that the angel was from God and that the voice was that of the Lord Jesus Christ. That witness of the Spirit was given to them and many who were not there. It is a witness that can, if we qualify for the companionship of the Holy Ghost, be ours and stay with us forever.

The Three Witnesses never denied their testimony of the Book of Mormon. They could not because they knew it was true. They made sacrifices and faced difficulties beyond what most people ever know. Oliver Cowdery gave the same testimony about the divine origin of the Book of Mormon as he lay dying. But in the times of trial, they wavered in their faith that Joseph was still God’s prophet

and that the only way to come unto the Savior was through His restored Church. That they continued to affirm what they saw and heard in that marvelous experience, during long periods of estrangement from the Church and from Joseph, makes their testimony more powerful.

### **Gift of Holy Ghost keeps testimony bright**

The Lord gave the witness of the Spirit without the same physical evidence to others who were severely tested by opposition and tribulation. Brigham Young, John Taylor, Heber C. Kimball, and many others stayed steady in their testimonies. They endured in faith because they paid the price to keep the companionship of the Holy Ghost and the burning testimony He alone brings.

Because of that, they had more than a memory of the moment when the Spirit whispered to their minds and hearts that God lived, that Jesus was the Christ, and that Joseph was their prophet. And they had more than a memory of the feeling of peace and the joy that witness brought. Because they qualified for the companionship of the Holy Ghost, they could say in every circumstance, however difficult, "I knew it then. I felt it was true then. I feel so now."

They did some simple things to keep that testimony bright and vibrant. We can teach those we love to do those same things. Done faithfully, they allow the Holy Ghost to be a constant companion. And we can promise those we love that they will feel joy and peace as the Spirit confirms truth, if they ask for that blessing in faith.

### **What to teach those you love**

Now, we teach things of the Spirit best with both example and testimony. I don't remember much of what my parents said about the Holy Ghost, but I remember what I felt when I saw them do

the things which brought the Holy Ghost into our home. Here are some things you can teach those you love with your example and testimony, with confidence that the Lord will send the Spirit to confirm truth to their minds and to their hearts.

#### *Teach them to pray*

Teach them to pray to the Father in faith in the name of Jesus Christ. There is a promise in the book of Omni about that: "And now, my beloved brethren, I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved."<sup>3</sup>

The young Joseph Smith showed us how to pray that way. He believed in the promise he read in the book of James.<sup>4</sup> He went to the grove with faith that his prayer would be answered. He wanted to know which church to join. He was submissive enough to be ready to do whatever he was told to do. So he prayed, as we must, already committed to obey.

What he was told to do required his whole soul and finally his life. He endured during the 24 years that followed by continuing to pray with that childlike faith and humility. We can teach those we love to pray with the intent to obey. We can promise them they will gain the companionship of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit will testify the truth to their hearts every time they read in the scriptures which came to us through the Prophet Joseph Smith. And the Spirit will confirm again that God spoke through His prophet.

#### *Teach them to ponder the scriptures daily*

Teach them to ponder the scriptures every day, with faith that they will be taught by the Spirit. Now listen to these words from scripture translated by Joseph

Smith. Expect to be taught now what you should do. You will feel impressions of how you should approach the scriptures and how you should teach that to the people you love.

“Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.”<sup>5</sup>

The Prophet Joseph taught us what it means to feast on the scriptures. He said that the Book of Mormon would get a man “nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”<sup>6</sup> You will grow closer to the Lord and love Him more. That is the promise in Jacob 3:2:

“O all ye that are pure in heart, lift up your heads and receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love; for ye may, if your minds are firm, forever.”

You and those you love will receive the word of God by obeying it. That will allow them to feel His love. That is one of the great blessings of the gift of the Holy Ghost. When we feel that love, we can know that our course in life is approved of God. That is the feast of the delicious fruit described in the Book of Mormon.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Teach them to build the kingdom of God*

Teach them to sacrifice to build up the kingdom of God. That sacrifice brings the testimony of the Spirit. The Prophet Joseph translated a wonderful promise written by a prophet long ago for our time:

“And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost; and if they endure unto the end they shall be lifted up at the last day, and shall be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the Lamb; and whoso shall publish peace, yea, tidings of great joy, how beautiful upon the mountains shall they be.”<sup>8</sup>

All can claim that promise. The youngest and the newest member can seek to build up the kingdom of God. Zion is made up of individuals and families. When their faith increases, the kingdom is established more firmly. We can try to help with that every day. Even the smallest act to build faith in another person or in a family qualifies us for the gift and power of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost testifies of truth. Therefore, in our service, our faith increases that Jesus is the Christ, that our Heavenly Father lives and loves us, and that Joseph was Their prophet. You can expect that, every time you go to a home to build faith, as a home teacher or a visiting teacher or a friend.

Some may not feel that blessing in their Church service. But that is because they have focused on the mechanics and not the glorious opportunity of publishing “peace, yea, tidings of great joy” to God’s children in His kingdom. When that is how we see our service, we will not only be lifted up at the last day but refreshed and encouraged along the way. And the Spirit will testify that this is the Lord’s kingdom restored in the latter days.

#### *Teach them to love others by serving them*

Teach them to love others by serving others. That brings the Spirit. The Prophet Joseph taught that, and he lived it. Of the many examples recorded of his loving nature, the one which most touches me occurred in Carthage Jail the night before his death. One of the men who went there with him was Dan Jones. The Prophet sensed the danger from the mob. He had reason to turn inward, to think of himself and his own peril. Instead his heart turned outward to comfort someone else.

“When all were apparently fast asleep, Joseph whispered to Dan Jones, ‘are you afraid to die?’ Dan [answered], ‘Has that time come, think you? Engaged in such a cause I do not think that death would have many terrors.’ Joseph replied, ‘You will

yet see Wales, and fulfill the mission appointed you before you die.’”<sup>9</sup>

Dan Jones survived to serve missions in Wales. Thousands of Welsh converts came to Zion. Some were gifted singers. They were among the first members of what became the Tabernacle Choir. When we hear the choir sing, I hope we remember Dan Jones, the faithful friend of the Prophet Joseph. Teach those you love to remember Joseph’s comfort, given when he needed comfort. When we comfort others, out of our faith in the Lord, He sends the Comforter to us. And the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, gave Joseph the power to give prophetic and loving encouragement.

Joseph showed in his loving kindness the truth of the words from the Book of Mormon: “Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—but charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.”<sup>10</sup>

### Example of the Prophet Joseph Smith

The Prophet Joseph is for me an example and a teacher of enduring well in faith. I do not worship him, but I thank and love him as the Lord’s prophet of the Restoration. He has helped me pray with the intent to obey. I am better able to feast on the word and the love of God. Because of him, I feel the Holy Ghost more often in the moments when I try to build the faith of a person in the Lord’s kingdom. And because of what I know of the

Prophet Joseph and the scriptures which were revealed through him, I more often feel the love of God for His children and His love for me when I reach down to lift someone up.

My prayer is that we and those we love will endure in faith in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and in His kingdom. I pray that we will keep the promise as we take the sacrament to always remember Him so we may *always* have His Spirit to be with us. I pray that in family home evenings and in missionary discussions and in all the times we worship together, we will invite the Holy Spirit by what we do and what we say and by what we are.

I testify that God lives. I know that Jesus Christ lives and that He is our Savior. This is His Church. Joseph was His prophet. President Gordon B. Hinckley is His prophet today. I know this by the Spirit, which tells me that it is true. I so testify, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Enos 1:27.
2. “The Testimony of Three Witnesses,” Book of Mormon.
3. Omni 1:26.
4. See James 1:5.
5. 2 Nephi 31:20.
6. *History of the Church*, 4:461; see also 3 Nephi 5:18; Doctrine and Covenants 17:6; 20:6–10.
7. See 1 Nephi 11:21–23; 15:36.
8. 1 Nephi 13:37.
9. *History of the Church*, 6:601.
10. Moroni 7:46–47.

## Elder William W. Parmley

### “Come, follow me”

We are disciples of Jesus Christ. In the words of Nephi, “We believe in Christ, . . . we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ,

we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ” (2 Nephi 25:24, 26). To believers everywhere, the three most powerful behavioral words He spoke were “Come, follow me” (Luke 18:22; see also Matthew 16:24; Mark

1:17; Luke 9:23). When asked by a scribe which is the most important commandment, Jesus replied:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

“And the second is . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30–31).

Using the template of these two commandments, let us discuss how we can best follow Him.

### **Follow the Savior’s example in prayer**

The Savior’s example of the reciprocal love between Him and His Father was always evident. Frequent, long, and heartfelt prayers by the Savior have set a powerful example for us to follow. The Father’s love for His Son was ever apparent, particularly at the time of His baptism by John: “And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17).

The unity between the two was apparent when the Savior said, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). Understanding that His will and the Father’s might even be transiently different as in Gethsemane (see Matthew 26:39) reminds us that our prayers may not always be answered in our preconceived way. Nevertheless, prayer is a powerful action principle. The Savior said that if one has faith and doubts not, “all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (see Matthew 21:21–22). Our love for the Savior must be accompanied by action: “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

### **Love neighbors and care for the needy**

Let us next consider the second of the great commandments, “Love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:39), or its higher counterpart taught to the Apostles, “That ye love one another; as I have loved

you” (John 13:34). Although having the next-door neighbors over for dinner is a wonderful way to express love, the Savior chose a much more difficult example when the lawyer asked Him the question, “And who is my neighbour?” (Luke 10:29).

There follows the familiar story of a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was robbed and beaten and left by the roadside half dead. The Levite and the priest looked on him and passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, who was despised by the Jews, had compassion and cared for him. The Samaritan did not ask about ethnicity before showing mercy. Jesus concluded this powerful story with the admonition to “go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10:37).

In every big city we have those who are beaten down and left by the roadside—those who are homeless, destitute, hungry, and sick. Some say that by giving them money we only support their habit of drug or alcohol addiction, thus enabling them to continue a lifestyle they have chosen. It is so easy to judge these individuals and, like Job’s friends, speculate about all the mistakes they have made in their lives that brought this great misery upon them (see Job 22; Mosiah 4:17).

Before we pass by like the Levite and the priest, however, let us consider the admonition of the Savior to “Come, follow me.” Remember that the Savior was homeless, had only the clothes on His back, and was often hungry. What would He do? There is no question what He would do. He would show mercy and minister unto them.

There are many ways to help the homeless, including the contribution of time, goods, and money to humanitarian groups, soup kitchens, or agencies that deal with these problems. Nevertheless, it seems to me that we must also show mercy unto them. The established principles of welfare are an appropriate guide. Remember that the poor will always be with us (see Mark 14:7).

### Importance of charity

The Savior emphasized this principle again when He discussed the Judgment Day and the separation of the sheep from the goats:

“Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

“When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

“Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:37–40).

Peter emphasized the importance of this kind of charity when he said, “And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8).

Mormon expressed similar sentiments with this admonition:

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

“But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him” (Moroni 7:46–47).

### Qualities of Jesus for us to exemplify

Jesus both taught and exemplified many personal qualities which we should consider as we try to follow Him. These qualities include love, meekness, humility, compassion, thirsting after righteousness, and being prayerful, merciful, and pure in heart. We should never judge others but should do unto our neighbor as we would have them do unto us. He taught that we should be the salt of the earth and a light unto the world. He said that what a man

thinketh in his heart is as important as his outward actions. We were told to forgive everyone, including our debtors, and to love our enemies. Not only are we to be peacemakers, but we are also to rejoice in persecution. He advised us to give our alms and to fast and pray in secret. He taught us to turn the other cheek and to go the extra mile. He especially cautioned us to lay up treasures in heaven rather than treasures on earth. (See Matthew 5–7.)

As we contemplate the full meaning of the phrase “Come, follow me,” it is apparent that we may have much to learn and much to do before we can fully respond to that injunction. It is of interest, however, that during the first 30 years of His life in Nazareth, Jesus apparently drew little attention to Himself even though He was living a sinless life (see Matthew 13:54–56; Mark 6:2–3). That should encourage us to do better in our own quiet and humble way without drawing attention to ourselves. The admonition to “Come, follow me” and the question “What would Jesus do?” provide powerful guidelines for living. Paying more attention to these guidelines will help all of us become more Christlike in our thoughts and actions.

Of the Savior, who is our exemplar, I bear personal witness that He lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Faust

We invite the choir and congregation to join in singing “How Firm a Foundation.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Seventy will address us. He will be followed by Bishop Richard C. Edgley of the Presiding Bishopric. We shall then hear from Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“How Firm a Foundation.”

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## Elder Quentin L. Cook

### **“Are you a Saint?”**

A number of years ago I was in Atlanta, Georgia, as an attorney representing a man who was buying a business. After several days of negotiations, we reached an agreement and signed the closing documents. That evening one of the sellers invited us to a dinner to celebrate the closing. When I arrived, he offered me an alcoholic drink, which I declined. He then said, “Are you a Saint?” I didn’t fully understand what he meant, and he repeated, “Are you a Latter-day Saint?”

I responded, “Yes, I am,” and he said he had been observing my personal habits during our negotiations and had concluded that I was either LDS or had a stomach problem. We both chuckled. He then informed me that he had known only one member of the Church on a personal basis: David B. Haight. They were both executives in Chicago with a large retail chain following World War II. He told me of the significant influence Elder Haight had been in his life and that he held him in the highest regard.

As I flew back home to San Francisco, I thought about what had occurred, especially in two respects: I was surprised at how it felt to be asked if I was a Saint, and I was impressed with the positive influence one outstanding example—Elder Haight—had on this good man.

### **What it means to be a Saint**

What does it mean to be a Saint? In the Lord’s Church, the members are Latter-day Saints, and they attempt to emulate the Savior, follow His teachings, and receive saving ordinances in order to live in the celestial kingdom with God the Father and our Savior Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> The Savior said, “This is my gospel; and ye know

the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do.”<sup>2</sup>

It is not easy to be a Latter-day Saint. It was not meant to be easy. The ultimate goal of living in the presence of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, is a privilege almost beyond comprehension.

### **“Come, Come, Ye Saints”**

Among the greatest trials the Church has ever faced were the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith and then ultimately the expulsion of the Saints from Nauvoo. When they were making their way across the plains under very adverse circumstances, William Clayton penned the great hymn “Come, Come, Ye Saints.” It was a hymn that stirred their souls and helped them remember their sacred mission. Who among us does not become emotional as we feel their sacrifice, courage, and commitment when we sing: “And should we die before our journey’s through, / Happy day! All is well!”<sup>3</sup>

This hymn gave them comfort, solace, and hope in a time of great difficulty with almost insurmountable obstacles. It buoyed them up and highlighted the fact that this mortal life is a journey between premortal life and eternal life to come—the great plan of happiness. Brother Clayton’s inspiring hymn emphasizes sacrifices and what it really means to be a Saint. Our pioneer members met the challenges of their day to be Saints.

### **Separate ourselves from worldly conduct**

The word *saint* in Greek denotes “set apart, separate, [and] holy.”<sup>4</sup> If we are to be Saints in our day, we need to separate ourselves from evil conduct and destructive pursuits that are prevalent in the world.



We are bombarded with visual images of violence and immorality. Inappropriate music and pornography are increasingly tolerated. The use of drugs and alcohol is rampant. There is less emphasis on honesty and character. Individual rights are demanded, but duties, responsibilities, and obligations are neglected. There has been a coarsening of dialogue and increased exposure to that which is base and vulgar. The adversary has been relentless in his efforts to undermine the plan of happiness. If we separate ourselves from this worldly conduct, we will have the Spirit in our lives and experience the joy of being worthy Latter-day Saints.

### **Avoid the worship of worldly gods**

As Saints we also need to avoid the worship of worldly gods. President Hinckley has expressed the desire that “everyone might have some of the good things of life” but has cautioned, “It is the obsession with riches that cankers and destroys.”<sup>5</sup>

In 1630 John Winthrop set forth a vision for the new land (America) on behalf of his fellow passengers as he sailed on board the *Arbella*. It has become known as “The City upon a Hill” sermon. In the final paragraph, Winthrop references Deuteronomy 30 and warns against worshiping and serving other gods—particularly emphasizing “pleasures, and profits.”<sup>6</sup> In the recent past, President Kimball counseled that even homes, boats, credentials, titles, and other similar pursuits can be worshiped as idols when they entice us away from love and service to God.<sup>7</sup>

The prophet Moroni, speaking of our day, warned about the love of money and substance and suggested that we would love them more than we “love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted.”<sup>8</sup>

If we are to be worthy Saints, we should minister to others and adhere to the Savior’s admonition to love God and our fellowmen.

### **Let holiness and sacrifice guide your life**

Separation from the evils of the world needs to be accompanied by holiness. A Saint loves the Savior and follows Him in holiness and devotion.<sup>9</sup> Evidence of this kind of holiness and devotion is exemplified by consecration and sacrifice. President Hinckley taught, “Without sacrifice there is no true worship of God.”<sup>10</sup> Sacrifice is the crowning test of the gospel. It means consecrating time, talents, energy, and earthly possessions to further the work of God. In Doctrine and Covenants 97, verse 8, it concludes, “All . . . who . . . are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command—they are accepted of me.”

Saints who respond to the Savior’s message will not be led astray by distracting and destructive pursuits and will be prepared to make appropriate sacrifices. The importance of sacrifice to those who want to be Saints is exemplified by the atoning sacrifice of the Savior, which is at the center of the gospel.<sup>11</sup>

### **Three questions for self-assessment**

Coming back to the original question that my acquaintance in Atlanta asked, “Are you a Saint?” may I suggest three questions that will allow for a self-assessment.

First, is the way we live consistent with what we believe, and would our friends and associates recognize, as Elder Haight’s friend did, that we have separated ourselves from worldly evils?

Second, are worldly pleasures, profits, and similar pursuits distracting us from following, worshiping, and serving the Savior in our daily lives?

Third, in order to serve God and be holy, are we making sacrifices consistent with our covenants?

What a wonderful blessing it is to be a Latter-day Saint. I love the words in the last lines of the hymn “O Saints of Zion”:

O Saints of Zion, tread the paths  
Your faithful fathers trod.  
Lift up your hearts in gratitude  
And serve the living God!<sup>12</sup>

I testify that avoiding evil and destructive pursuits and sacrificing in order to serve will qualify us to experience the joy of being committed Latter-day Saints and, as the scriptures promise, bring “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.”<sup>13</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See 2 Nephi 9:18.
2. 3 Nephi 27:21.

3. *Hymns*, no. 30.
4. In Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. (1992), 3:1249.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Thou Shalt Not Covet,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1990, 4–5.
6. “A Model of Christian Charity,” in Robert L. Ferm, ed., *Issues in American Protestantism* (1969), 11.
7. See *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (1969), 40–41.
8. Mormon 8:37.
9. See Wm. Grant Bangerter, in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 12; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 11.
10. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 565.
11. See Alma 34:8–16.
12. *Hymns*, no. 39.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.

## Bishop Richard C. Edgley

### Heroes are all around us

Some time ago in my high priests quorum meeting, the instructor introduced the lesson by asking each of us to respond to who our hero is and why. As each member took his turn responding, the answers were not unexpected. Of course, someone named the Savior, the Redeemer of the world. Another spoke of Abraham Lincoln, who freed the slaves, led the United States through a civil war, and eventually unified the country. Others chose the Prophet Joseph Smith and our beloved current prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley. As each named a hero, I silently concurred and acknowledged that all of these were men worthy of emulating and that I would be a better person if I possessed some of the qualities that made those men great.

When my turn came to respond, I turned to a brother on my right, a few seats down the row from me, and said, “My hero is Ken Sweatfield and his wife, Jo Ann.”

For 20 years I watched Ken and Jo Ann care for their comatose son with all the love and patience a parent could possibly give. I had often pondered the shattered hopes and dreams they surely had for Shane before he suffered a terrible automobile accident just two weeks before he was to begin his mission in Leeds, England. I have watched Ken and Jo Ann wheel Shane into the sunlight or push him through the neighborhood, describing the scenery, hoping that he might hear and feel, and hoping that the fresh air and sunlight might lighten a very subdued spirit. For 20 years there were no vacations from this care, few evenings out, but there was always a spirit of faith, optimism, and gratitude—never a show of anger, despair, or questioning of God’s purposes.

I then turned to a brother on my left and said, “My hero is Jim Newton and his wife, Helen.” Shortly after Jim and Helen’s son Zach received his mission call to Peru, he was taken in an automobile accident.

When I heard of the accident, I rushed to the hospital, hoping to hear that Zach was alive and would recover. The parents, in a most dignified and peaceful manner, explained that Zach would now be serving his mission on the other side of the veil. As I witnessed the calm resolve of these two strong parents, I realized that through the pain and anguish there was a peace that could come only through a deep and abiding faith in a loving Father and an atoning Savior. My faith was strengthened, and through their inspiration my resolve to follow their example in meeting similar trials and tragedies was reaffirmed.

I could have also answered that my hero is Tom Abbott and his son John, my faithful home teachers who never missed a home teaching assignment even though we are often a difficult family to catch at home. I could have named dozens of others that I admire and could call my heroes. Many do not hold so-called high or prominent callings in the Church, but all are worthy to hold any position. None are widely known to the general membership of the Church, but all, I am certain, are known by name to our Heavenly Father.

### **Humble, righteous lives lend strength**

On the occasions that I am able to attend sacrament meeting in my own ward, I am often reflective as I look down in the congregation and see the same faces Sunday after Sunday. Some I have seen regularly in sacrament meeting for more than 20 years. Again, most are not in the limelight of the Church, but all consistently attend their meetings and privately meet life's challenges.

These are the many members I see, admire, and am grateful for. They are not seeking position, prominence, or fame, but each is earning a place in our Father's kingdom by taking care of the business of everyday living. They are consistently doing the unnoticed, the unspectacular—but humbly and righteously doing what is im-

portant. Challenges they have, but out of their bitter struggles they are able to find the sweetness that is so often the silent companion to adversity. This picture is duplicated hundreds of times in thousands of wards throughout the world. They are The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Yes, the strength of the Church is in the millions of humble members striving every day to do the will of the Savior—day by day, one step at a time. These humble members come from all nationalities, all social strata, and every economic background. They include those of the highest educational backgrounds as well as those of the humblest who live in the smallest hamlets in the most remote areas of the world—all having hearts throbbing with a vital testimony of Jesus Christ and a desire to serve the Lord.

### **Heroes are humble, show gratitude**

As I have pondered these faithful members, I am struck by two qualities they all seem to have. First, regardless of social or economic status or position, their humility leads to submissiveness to the Lord's will. And second, in spite of the difficulties and trials of life, they are able to maintain a sense of gratitude for God's blessings and life's goodness. Humility and gratitude are truly the twin characteristics of happiness.

A story is told of an encounter between the Prophet Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. In the presence of a rather large group of brethren, the Prophet severely chastised Brother Brigham for some failing in his duty. Everyone, I suppose somewhat stunned, waited to see what Brigham's response would be. After all, Brigham, who later became known as the Lion of the Lord, was no shrinking violet by any means. Brigham slowly rose to his feet, and in words that truly reflected his character and humility, he simply bowed his head and said, "Joseph, what do you

want me to do?" The story goes that sobbing, Joseph ran from the podium, threw his arms around Brigham, and said in effect, "You passed, Brother Brigham, you passed" (see Truman G. Madsen, "Hugh B. Brown—Youthful Veteran," *New Era*, Apr. 1976, 16).

Many of us live or work in an environment where humility is often misunderstood and considered a weakness. Not many corporations or institutions include humility as a value statement or a desired characteristic of their management. Yet as we learn about the workings of God, the power of a humble and submissive spirit becomes apparent. In the kingdom of God, greatness begins with humility and submissiveness. These companion virtues are the first critical steps to opening the doors to the blessings of God and the power of the priesthood. It matters not who we are or how lofty our credentials appear. Humility and submissiveness to the Lord, coupled with a grateful heart, are our strength and our hope.

### **Importance of humility and sacrifice**

In giving the requirements for membership in His Church, the Lord stated, "All those who humble themselves before God . . . and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, . . . [these are the ones who] shall be received by baptism into his church" (D&C 20:37).

And so within the membership of the Church we see men and women of all backgrounds humbly submitting to the counsel of God. We see the prominent business executive graciously and humbly receiving and being taught by a humble, sometimes even intimidated home teacher. We see the highly educated humbly following counsel from their bishops, who sometimes have little formal education. We see former bishops and stake presidents graciously and humbly accepting callings to teach in the Primary, assist in the nursery, or assemble humanitarian kits

to be sent to the needy throughout the world. We see thousands of mature couples leaving their comfortable homes to live in circumstances to which they are not accustomed, to humbly serve the poverty-stricken throughout the world—and then serve again and again and again. We see the poverty-stricken in the world humbly sacrificing to share their meager substance of life with those who are even more destitute. And each, in their humility, is serving and giving with a grateful heart and giving praise to God.

### **God empowers the humble**

King Benjamin warned that we must "[become] as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [us]" (Mosiah 3:19).

Humbly submitting our will to the Father brings us the empowerment of God—the power of humility. It is the power to meet life's adversities, the power of peace, the power of hope, the power of a heart throbbing with a love for and testimony of the Savior Jesus Christ, even the power of redemption. To this end, the Savior is our supreme example of the power of humility and submissiveness. After all, His submitting His will to the Father brought about the greatest and even the most powerful event in all of history. Perhaps some of the most sacred words in all the scriptures are simply, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

So we have the thousands, even millions, of throbbing hearts—heroes, I suspect we could say, but perhaps a more appropriate description is merely humble followers of the Savior Jesus Christ. And, as President Hinckley has asked of each of us, they are just doing their best—one day at a time.

May a humble and submissive heart be our empowerment from God, with all of its attendant blessings, is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Neal A. Maxwell

### How choice a seer!

From 1820 on, Joseph Smith was steadily attacked in a pattern of accusations—followed by eventual vindications. The pattern continues.

Just as prophesied, fools deride him, hell rages against him, and his name is “both good and evil spoken of” (Joseph Smith—History 1:33). This swirl needlessly preoccupies a few who seem to prefer chewing on old bones in the outer courtyard instead of coming inside to the resplendent, revelatory banquet, thus diverting them from giving due attention to Joseph’s mission as “a choice seer” (see 2 Nephi 3:6–7).

As Ammon’s experience taught, a seer has the power to translate ancient records, and “a seer is greater than a prophet.” But, said Ammon, “a seer is . . . a prophet also” (see Mosiah 8:11–16). Thus called, Joseph has become “a great benefit to his fellow beings” (Mosiah 8:18).

The “choice” translator brought forth —“by the gift and power of God” (D&C 135:3)—the Book of Mormon, something tangible and verifiable. For all who heed it, the Book of Mormon is like the flinging open of long-closed doors on what was assumed to be a complete canon of scripture.

Noted on the very title page is the book’s special role in “convincing” mortals “that Jesus is the Christ” (see also 2 Nephi 25:18). In a day of disbelief and equivocation regarding this preeminent fact, this “convincing” effect is so needed! How sharp-edged that promise!

The Book of Mormon will be “read upon the housetops” (2 Nephi 27:11). Even if neglected, it will constitute a lingering invitation for “as long as the earth shall stand” (2 Nephi 25:22).

No wonder “the ends of the earth shall inquire after [Joseph’s] name” (D&C

122:1). Reassuring prophecies further declare that Joseph’s enemies “shall be confounded” and that the Prophet’s people will not be “turned against [him] by the testimony of traitors” (see 2 Nephi 3:14; D&C 122:3).

As President Faust reminded us yesterday, of his own imperfections, Joseph said, “I never told you I was perfect—but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught” (Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith* [1980], 369).

### Abundant and stunning revelations

Ironically, young Joseph Smith went into the grove merely wanting to know which church to join—not seeking to be called as a seer, revelator, translator, and prophet (see D&C 21:1). In the grove and subsequently, there came sunbursts of serendipity! The resulting revelations and translations were not mere speculations, thoughts for the day, or even epigrams, but instead they were divine, declarative disclosures.

The volume of resulting revelations and translations is enormous, underscoring the words “choice seer.” But it isn’t just the sheer volume of what Joseph received which is now being shared with mankind; it is also the existence of “stunners” in the midst of such abundance.

### Revelations about a vast universe

Through multiple revelations and translations, for example, came a description of a universe far, far exceeding the astrophysics of the 1830s, a cosmos containing “worlds without number” and advising us further that the “inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters [of] God” (Moses 1:33; D&C 76:24).

Anciently, the vastness of Abraham’s eventual posterity was compared to the

sand of the sea, a staggering promise (see Genesis 22:17). The Restoration's revelations and translations accommodate a vast universe; thus it is no surprise to us that scientists' latest estimate of the number of stars in the universe is approximately 70 sextillion—"more stars in the sky," scientists say, "than there are grains of sand in every beach and desert on Earth" (Allison M. Heinrichs, "The Stellar Census: 70 Sextillion," *Los Angeles Times*, July 26, 2003; see also Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* [1980], 196).

### Revelations about God's central purpose

Revelations and translations also came regarding God's central purpose "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man," giving us divine, succinct reassurances (Moses 1:39). God's plans for the development of souls have not changed. They were described to ancient Israel, whose 40 years in the wilderness were "to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no" (Deuteronomy 8:2). Therefore, disciples today can understand why our faith and patience are tried at times—so we can be prepared to go Home (see Mosiah 23:21).

Brothers and sisters, we do not go many hours in our lives without having to decide again "which way do we face" and whether we will pitch our tents facing Sodom or the holy temple (see Genesis 13:12; Mosiah 2:6).

God has no distracting hobbies off somewhere in the universe. We are at the very center of His concerns and purposes. What a sharp contrast to those who believe that man lives in an "unconscious universe" (Bertrand Russell, "A Free Man's Worship," in *Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays* [1917], 50), a "universe . . . without a master" (Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, trans. Justin O'Brien [1955], 123).

### Revelations about us as God's children

Revelations likewise came about our longevity as God's spirit children, since "man was also in the beginning with God"—a declaration accompanied by even further glimmers about man's eternal nature (D&C 93:29). These enunciations with their profound implications are major—challenging, for instance, the teaching that man was created in an instant "out of nothing."

A further reality of our being with God "in the beginning" means that you have been you for a long time. Hence, the Apostle John correctly wrote that "[God] first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Likewise, amid the mortal turbulence, we learn who other mortals really are—our spiritual brothers and sisters, not functions, rivals, or enemies. Moreover, we should have a special sanctity and regard for human life.

### Revelations respond to deepest yearnings

"Stunners" all, these three revelations and translations are especially responsive to the deepest human yearnings and puzzles. They restructure our understanding of the nature of God, of the universe, and likewise of our personal identity and of life's meaning! What could be more personal than these brief but encompassing declarations?

If Joseph Smith had been the conduit for only one such divine revelation, it would be, standing alone, sufficient to ensure his prophetic greatness. Yet even though God wants to give us "all that [He] hath," we suffer from a poverty of perceptions! (D&C 84:38).

Little wonder that Paul commended Abraham, who "staggered not . . . [in] unbelief" (Romans 4:20). There is a risk when we contemplate the doctrines of the Restoration that we might "stagger" in the face of such bold and promising truths.

Given such breathtaking revelations and translations, let us, therefore, heed King Benjamin's counsel: "Believe in God; . . . believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend" (Mosiah 4:9).

### **Many are strangers to the Savior**

An omniscient God leaves all mortals free to choose, but how grateful we should be that God chose long, long ago to rescue and to resurrect all His children through the Atonement of His Son. Nevertheless, some reject and many are indifferent to these and other divine beckonings, mostly because they are too caught up in the cares of the world. They are strangers to the Savior, who is far from the thoughts and intents of their hearts (see Mosiah 5:13).

In the midst of God's plan and the universe's incredible vastness is incredible personalness. For example, "[God] looketh down upon all the children of men; and he knows all the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Alma 18:32; see also Isaiah 66:18).

Since we are thus fully accountable to Him, on Judgment Day we cannot invoke the Fifth Amendment!

### **The preeminent revelation**

I have saved for last the preeminent revelation that truly ranks first: the theophanies showing the reality of the resurrected Jesus Christ, who is our Savior! Beginning with the Sacred Grove, other confirming appearances soon followed in obscure locations like Kirtland and Hiram, and all mankind thereby received this desperately needed confirmation.

Alas, in a secular world Jesus is regarded by many, at best, as a distant figure; He is even denigrated. How transcendently special, therefore, that the revelations of the Restoration confirm this cosmic fact:

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16).

Jesus, who performed the "infinite atonement," thereby suffered infinitely and is a fully comprehending Savior, having "descended below all things" and "comprehended all things" (2 Nephi 9:7; D&C 88:6). Yes, as in the lyrics of the moving spiritual of yesteryear, "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen; nobody knows but Jesus."

### **Many need these rescuing revelations**

Brothers and sisters, the cast of players on this planet for whom the revelations and translations are so pertinent includes those who, in that familiar phrase, are living "lives of quiet desperation" (Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* [1965], 7). They have now been joined by those living lives of noisy, slurping indulgence, wrongly celebrating their capacity to feel so that they finally lose their capacity to feel and become "past feeling" (Moroni 9:20; Ephesians 4:19; 1 Nephi 17:45). Hence they lick their particular platters in a desperate search for more sensations. Such individuals, however, are still not a majority but a "lesser part" of the people (see Mosiah 29:26–27).

Notably, at the last day the adversary "will not support" those who followed him anyway (Alma 30:60). He cannot. Jesus will triumph majestically, and the adversary's clever constructs, "pleasing [to] the carnal mind," will also collapse, and "the fall thereof [will be] exceedingly great" (Alma 30:53; 1 Nephi 11:36). Even now, one can see in the lives of those prodigals who come to themselves the devil's doctrines dripping in early meltdown (see Luke 15:17). Many, having experienced the utter emptiness of the lower ways, are "in a preparation to hear the word" and now await being informed of the rescuing revelations and translations (Alma 32:6).

### Do not hold back these revelations

Brothers and sisters, we dare not hold back the restored gospel's declaratives! We dare not hold back the reassuring revelations and truth-telling translations about "things as they really are, and . . . things as they really will be" (Jacob 4:13). These are so needed by those whose weary hands hang down because they suffer from doctrinal anemia, which can best be treated by the red blood cells of the Restoration. To hold back would be to restrain repentance and to obscure the beckoning spiritual alternative, which will become "fair as the sun, and clear as the moon" (D&C 105:31).

Meanwhile, let us expect that many will regard us indifferently. Others will see us as quaint or misled. Let us bear the pointing fingers which, ironically, belong to those finally who, being bored, find the "great and spacious building" to be a stale and cramped third-class hotel (see 1 Nephi 8:31–33). Let us revile not the revilers and heed them not (see D&C 31:9). Instead, let us use our energy to hold up the shield of faith to quench the incoming fiery darts—aided perhaps by a touch of spiritual Teflon (see 1 Nephi 15:24).

Brothers and sisters, given all of the foregoing, "what can I say more" except "Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!" (Jacob 6:12; "Praise to the Man," *Hymns*, no. 27). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen!

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The choir sang "My Shepherd Will Supply My Need."

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### President Faust

The choir has just sung "My Shepherd Will Supply My Need."

Before President Hinckley addresses us, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the single adult choir from the Utah South Area, and the priesthood choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music.

We thank our city officials for the co-operation given, the doctors, the Church health unit nurses, and ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance, the ushers and interpreters, and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Conference Center.

We also express appreciation to the local and national media representatives for their coverage of the conference and to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations, satellite and cable systems, and the Internet service providers who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

As you travel home from this conference, we ask you to obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "Come, Let Us Anew." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Douglas L. Callister of the Seventy, and this conference will then be adjourned until April 2004.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Let us live the gospel more fully

What a glorious time we have had together, my beloved brethren and sisters.

It is truly a wonderful thing to step out of the world, as it were, and set aside two days to reflect on things divine.



We are all so busy with our mundane pursuits which pull us this way and that. We all need, the whole world needs, the opportunity to meditate and reflect on the things of God and to listen to words that inspire and help.

Our testimonies have been strengthened, and it is good, for as President Harold B. Lee once said, our testimonies need renewing every day.<sup>1</sup>

I am satisfied that the Latter-day Saints have within their hearts a desire to do the right thing, to live after the manner which the Lord has outlined for us. We have been reminded of many of these things during this conference.

I hope that when we return to our homes, before retiring for the night, we each will get on our knees and express our appreciation and ask for the strength to live the gospel more fully as a result of this conference.

I am so grateful for the beautiful music of the choir; they have sung so wonderfully. This is such a great and dedicated organization, and we thank all who give so generously of their time and talents to this great effort. I am grateful for the music yesterday of the singles choir; they were an inspiration. And the great singing last night of the young men in the Missionary Training Center, who came and sang to us with great power, thank you so very much for what you have given us.

### **“Come unto Christ, and be perfected”**

Now I would like to read in conclusion just a few words from Moroni:

“And awake, and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion; and strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders forever, that thou mayest no more be confounded, that the covenants of the Eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled.

“Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of [Christ]” (Moroni 10:31–32).

### **Each a better person**

As a result of this great conference, each of us should be a better man or a better woman, a better boy or a better girl. Thank you so much, my brothers and sisters, for your great service in moving this work forward. What a tremendous work you are doing, you faithful Latter-day Saints all across the world, who carry in your hearts a firm and unswerving testimony of the reality of the living God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Redeemer, and of Their appearance in this dispensation to begin anew a great era in the history of the world in preparation for that time when the Son of God shall come to reign as Lord of lords and King of kings.

May the blessings of heaven rest upon you, my dear friends. I pray that what you have heard and seen may make a difference in your lives. I pray that each of us will be a little more kind, a little more thoughtful, a little more courteous. I pray that we will keep our tongues in check and not let anger prompt words which we would later regret. I pray that we may have the strength and the will to turn the other cheek, to walk the extra mile in lifting up the feeble knees of those in distress.

This gospel is an intimate thing. It is not some distant concept. It is applicable in our lives. It can change our very natures.

May God bless you, my wonderful, faithful associates, in this great work. May

His peace and His love be upon you and enshrine your lives with an essence of godliness.

As we return to our homes, I pray that in our hearts there will be a resolution to live together more fully as we should do as Latter-day Saints. I leave my love and my blessing with you in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ. God be with you till we meet again. Thank you, and amen.

#### NOTE

1. See Gordon B. Hinckley, *Faith: The Essence of True Religion* (1989), 93.

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The choir sang “Come, Let Us Anew.” Elder Douglas L. Callister offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir. John Longhurst, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by a single adult choir from the Utah South Area. The choir was directed by James C. Kasen, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

Music for the priesthood session was provided by a priesthood choir from the

Provo Missionary Training Center. Douglas Brenchley directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe.

#### **F. Michael Watson**

Clerk of the Conference

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**World:** we live and work in, but must rise above, 5, 88; we cannot follow, 24; we must be on guard in, 26; was prepared for the Restoration over a period of centuries, 29; fabric of, is deteriorating, 33; discord and enmity in, 33; doctrines and teachings of Jesus provide solutions to the ills of, 33–34; insecurity in, has filtered into our homes and lives, 36; we have hope despite hopelessness in, 36; give up traditions of, that conflict with the gospel, 39–42; movement in Church positions is not like promotions and reductions in, 40–41; contrast between the Lord's way and the way of, 41; be the light of, 42, 86, 99; will hate us, 42; come out of the culture of, and into the culture of the gospel, 42; the Lord sends more exceptional spirits to, as obedience and morality decline in, 43; nurturing children's spiritual capacities helps them resist evil in, 44; many in, have a misconception of God, 73; stand firm in holding back, 86; avoid the sultry siren voice of, 88; strength gained from the home makes us better able to face, 88; we must separate ourselves from evil conduct and destructive pursuits that are prevalent in, 100; the Holy Ghost comes when we separate ourselves from, 101; avoid the worship of worldly gods, 101; humility is often considered a weakness in, 104; many are indifferent to divine beckonings because they are too caught up in the cares of, 107

**Worship:** we are commanded to participate in, 40; of idols in the time of Moses, 91–92; avoid, of worldly gods, 101; there is no true, without sacrifice, 101

**Worthiness:** high standards of moral, for missionaries, 44; is essential for missionaries to receive guidance from the Holy Ghost, 44; of Aaronic Priesthood holders, 49; bishops judge members', 66; to receive guidance from the Lord, 90

## Y

**Young men:** should actively participate in their priesthood quorum, 44. *See also* Aaronic Priesthood; Youth

**Young women:** should attend class activities and complete Personal Progress goals, 44. *See also* Youth

**Youth:** are confused and misled by the deviant behavior of so-called stars they want to emulate, 16; counsel to, who feel alone, 27; are an example to untold millions, 27; have extraordinary potential, 43; encouraged to realize their full potential, 43, 46; leaders are to strengthen the spiritual capacity of, 44; should prepare to receive temple ordinances and raise an eternal family, 46; can hold responsible positions, 51–52; being baptized for the dead, 59; must hold to the faith, 86–87. *See also* Children; Young Men; Young Women

## Z

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